THE CTHULHU MYTHOS

BY AUGUST DERLETH

INTRODUCTION BY RAMSEY CAMPBELL

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EDITOR'S NOTE

I HAVE JUST DISCOVERED a boy of seventeen who promises to develop into something of a fantaisiste. He is August W. Derleth . . . & turns out to be a veritable little prodigy; devoted to Dunsany & Machen, & ambitious to excel in their chosen field."

In writing the above words to one of his correspondents in 1926, H. P. Lovecraft could not have realized that he had just encountered the single most significant figure in the advancement of his posthumous renown. August Derleth soon became a member of the legendary Lovecraft Circle of writers, who contributed Mythos-related stories to *Weird Tales* magazine, but more importantly, after Lovecraft's death in 1937 Derleth founded the publishing firm of Arkham House to preserve the darkly enduring legacy of his great friend.

In recognition of August Derleth's lifelong dedication to H. P. Lovecraft and his work, all of Derleth's own noncollaborative contributions to the Cthulhu Mythos are collected in the present volume. The opening Derleth Mythos section presents the author's idiosyncratic interpretation of the Mythos as forces of good versus evil; *The Mask of Cthulhu* section includes a story, "The Return of Hastur," that was partly read and critiqued by Lovecraft himself shortly before his death; and *The Trail of Cthulhu* is an

interconnected five-part novel featuring Derleth's most intriguing contribution to the Mythos, Dr. Laban Shrewsbury. No one but August Derleth could have captured so skillfully the mood and design of H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos and yet done so in a manner all his own.

—JAMES TURNER
1996

INTRODUCTION

H. P. LOVECRAFT AND THE Mythos he created are among the pinnacles of the weird tale. That they are now widely appreciated as such is due in a number of ways to the efforts of his friend and literary pupil August Derleth.

Let me start with Lovecraft. For the two decades preceding his death in 1937 he set about trying to create the perfect form for the tale of supernatural terror. His seminal essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature* records his exploration of the classics of the genre, particularly British and American. Among the writers he praises most highly are Edgar Allan Poe, Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen and Lord Dunsany, and he learned from all of them, thus becoming the first writer to unite the British and American traditions of the field. Poe showed him singleness of effect and how to suit one's prose to it; in Blackwood he admired the sense of alien beings and dimensions invading our own, while from Machen he borrowed the notion of an inhuman past lurking in the present. At the same time he did his best to avoid the failings which he found in even his favourite writers—in Poe, what Lovecraft saw as a lack of cosmic vision; in Blackwood, too much Victorian occult jargon, no doubt deriving from Blackwood's membership in the Order of the Golden Dawn. Occult commonplaces which explained too much

and tied up too many loose ends had no imaginative appeal for Lovecraft, and so he followed Dunsany's example and invented his own myths.

It was by no means a systematic process. His most famous creation, the *Necronomicon,* only gradually takes shape in various tales. Cthulhu, the best-known (though in no sense the leader) of his pantheon of alien beings worshipped by human cults, makes its only appearance in "The Call of Cthulhu," halfway through Lovecraft's career as a writer. From that story onward Lovecraft developed the kind of weird tale for which he is best remembered, a fusion of supernatural horror and science fiction, each story a fresh attempt to communicate the indifference and awesome otherness of the universe around us. He seldom felt even close to success, and he was particularly disparaging of the myths he created—"Yog-Sothothery," as he called his concept, never "the Cthulhu Mythos." In 1937 he died, apparently convinced he was a failure. Very few of his stories had seen the light outside pulp magazines. Although Dashiell Hammett had anthologised one tale, various publishers had rejected a collection of his tales in hardcover.

August Derleth was then a writer, not only or primarily of weird tales, and a correspondent of Lovecraft's. The day he heard of Lovecraft's death he walked through his beloved Wisconsin countryside and sat by a brook to decide how a memorial anthology of Lovecraft's stories could be published. Having edited it with Donald Wandrei, Derleth sent the massive book on the rounds of New York publishers. Their reactions convinced him that he should publish the book himself, and so between them he and Wandrei financed the first volume under a new imprint, the most famed publisher of the fantastic in the world—Arkham House.

The book was *The Outsider and Others,* and was followed in 1943 by a massive compilation of the rest of Lovecraft's fiction, *Beyond the Wall of Sleep.* Less than thirteen hundred copies of each were printed, and even those took years to sell, so limited was Lovecraft's reputation then. Nevertheless there was an audience, however small, which was eager for more of the same, and Derleth was their man.

Lovecraft had seen the earliest work Derleth had written along his lines. On 11 September 1931 he wrote to Clark Ashton Smith: "Little Derleth is getting cleverer and cleverer in his weird ideas. Some of his new tales are really remarkably good—especially such specimens as *The Thing that Walked on the Wind . . .*" [italics Lovecraft's]. He also read an early draft of "The Return

of Hastur" and made suggestions for revision. It isn't clear if he saw how Derleth planned to develop his mythos. What Lovecraft had conceived in fragments, as a way of giving glimpses of the cosmic scope of his imagination, Derleth rationalised into a system.

He was beginning to do so in "The Thing that Walked on the Wind." Lovecraft left Blackwood's occult notion of elementals alone, but you'll find it in this Derleth story, and before long he set about dividing Lovecraft's beings into categories, making Cthulhu into a water elemental on the basis that its habitat was inundated. More to the point, while Lovecraft was an atheist, Derleth was a Catholic ("albeit," as he once wrote to me, "a generally anticlerical one"). It was this philosophical difference which led him to turn Lovecraft's expression of awe and terror at the vastness of the universe into a confrontation between good and evil.

"All my stories, unconnected as they may be, are based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by another race who, in practising black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside ever ready to take possession of this earth again." This statement, often cited as Lovecraft's by Derleth but to be found only in a letter from the late composer Harold Farnese—who seems either to have misremembered a comment of Lovecraft's or quoted him as having said what Farnese felt he should have said—fits the stories in the present book far more snugly than it does Lovecraft's own work. (What Lovecraft did write in 1927, to the editor of *Weird Tales,* was "All my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large"; I leave the reader to decide if the two statements are compatible.) In *H. P. Lovecraft: Some Notes Toward a Biography,* Derleth describes the Cthulhu Mythos as "basically similar to the Christian Mythos, particularly in regard to the expulsion of Satan from Eden, and the power of evil to survive," which suggests that he had come to view Lovecraft's creation in terms of his own use of it. In "The Shadow over Innsmouth," the nearest Lovecraft came to writing a suspense story, stones carved with magic signs are said to be able to protect humans from an amphibious race, but those are the only defences Lovecraft provides.

Nobody except Lovecraft would have been entitled to insist that Derleth use his concepts slavishly, of course, any more than one would expect fidelity of a movie based on Lovecraft's work. These stories demand to be

seen as a tribute to Lovecraft and to the power of his original concept, and a demonstration of the creative fun Derleth had with them.

In "The Dweller in Darkness" he states a Lovecraftian motif which he was to make peculiarly his—the inhuman creature passing for human—and brings an abundance of italics to the task of equalling the power of Lovecraft's prose. Like too few of Lovecraft's imitators, he was aware of Lovecraft's roots in the genre, so that the next group of stories in this book—"Beyond the Threshold," and especially "Ithaqua" and "The Thing that Walked on the Wind," a title which all by itself was enough to evoke a sense of awe when I first encountered it in my early teens—are touched by Blackwood's nature mysticism. An unexpected calm has fallen on the subsequent pair of stories, for all that they were written twelve years apart. Perhaps in "The Passing of Eric Holm" (originally published under the pen name "Will Garth" in the pseudonym-riddled pulp magazine *Strange Stories*) Derleth had in mind the New England supernatural writer Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman, whose "quiet, unadorned prose style" he praises in his 1946 book on writing fiction. I rather think that the author of *Cathedrals in England,* the book cited in "Something from Out There," is meant to be M. R. James, the English master of the ghost story, and this tale of Derleth's has a touch of Jamesian reticence.

Curious it is—damnably odd—that none of these tales found a place in Derleth's first collection of his Mythos tales, the 1958 *Mask of Cthulhu.* Hastur returns afresh, and so do echoes of Lovecraft's prose. While "The Whippoorwills in the Hills" is a kind of sequel of Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror," the final paragraphs are a deliberate parody of the ending of another Lovecraft tale—I leave to my reader the experience of discovering or rediscovering which. "Something in Wood" is a case of the kind of fun many fictionists have when writing about critics, and was there a wicked gleam in Derleth's eye when he suggested that the music of Roy Harris reached back before the human race? "The Sandwin Compact" begins by letting the narrator and his cousin express the boyishness underlying the fiction and ends by celebrating an image from "The Whippoorwills in the Hills." Readers familiar with Innsmouth may be expected to appreciate the fishy redolence of "The House in the Valley" and the self-discovery which the narrator of "The Seal of R'lyeh" is bound to make.

As for *The Trail of Cthulhu,* it proves that you can't keep a good proto-

plasmic monster down. Just as *The Lurker at the Threshold* (a novel by Derleth incorporating two short passages by Lovecraft) was compared to the detective fiction of Dorothy L. Sayers, so Everett Bleiler rightly compares *Trail*, a fix-up of five stories published in *Weird Tales* from 1943 to 1952, with Sax Rohmer, whose arch-villain Fu Manchu was forever to be heard of again. Given the eagerness of horror movie fans these days to have their favourite monsters rise from the dead, we might conclude that Derleth was ahead of his time. As in many serials, each episode contains a resumé of previous events.

Derleth was a jealous guardian of the Cthulhu Mythos in his lifetime, but he encouraged the present writer to add to it thirty-five years ago—he handed on his torch to me, and the public must decide if I proved myself worthy. For that start to my career in professional print I can never be too thankful, and writing this tribute doesn't begin to say how much. Today's admirers of Lovecraft have many reasons to be grateful to Derleth, and so do those who can't get enough of the Mythos.

—RAMSEY CAMPBELL
Wallasey, Merseyside
19 May 1996

THE DERLETH MYTHOS

THE DWELLER IN DARKNESS

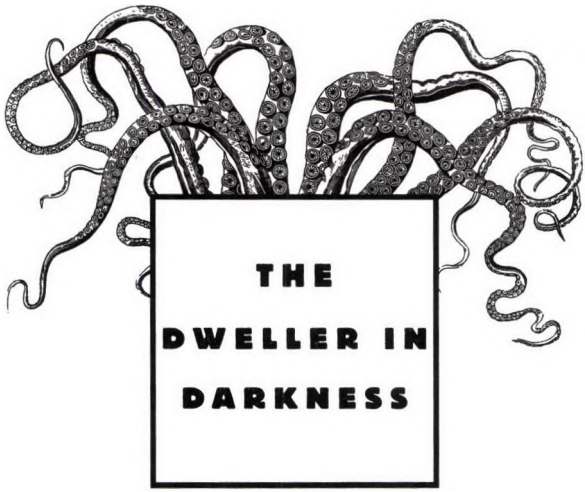
BEYOND THE THRESHOLD

THE THING THAT WALKED ON THE WIND

ITHAQUA

THE PASSING OF ERIC HOLM

SOMETHING FROM OUT THERE



Searchers after horror haunt strange, far places. For them are the catacombs of Ptolemais, and the carven mausolea of the nightmare countries. They climb to the moonlit towers of ruined Rhine castles, and falter down black cobwebbed steps beneath the scattered stones of forgotten cities in Asia. The haunted wood and the desolate mountain are their shrines, and they linger around the sinister monoliths on uninhabited islands. But the true epicure in the terrible, to whom a new thrill of unutterable ghastliness is the chief end and justification of existence, esteems most of all the ancient, lonely farmhouses of backwoods regions; for there the dark elements of strength, solitude, grotesqueness, and ignorance combine to form the perfection of the hideous.

—H. P. LOVECRAFT

I

UNTIL RECENTLY, if a traveller in north central Wisconsin took the left fork at the junction of the Brule River highway and the Chequamegon pike on the way to Pashepaho, he would find himself in country so primitive that it would seem remote from all human contact. If he drove on along the little-used road, he might in time pass a few tumble-

down shacks where presumably people had once lived and which have long ago been taken back by the encroaching forest; it is not desolate country, but an area thick with growth, and over all its expanse there persists an intangible aura of the sinister, a kind of ominous oppression of the spirit quickly manifest to even the most casual traveller, for the road he has taken becomes ever more and more difficult to travel, and is eventually lost just short of a deserted lodge built on the edge of a clear blue lake around which century-old trees brood eternally, a country where the only sounds are the cries of the owls, the whippoorwills, and the eerie loons at night, and the wind's voice in the trees, and—but is it always the wind's voice in the trees? And who can say whether the snapped twig is the sign of an animal passing—or of something more, some other creature beyond man's ken?

For the forest surrounding the abandoned lodge at Rick's Lake had a curious reputation long before I myself knew it, a reputation which transcended similar stories about similar primeval places. There were odd rumors about something that dwelt in the depths of the forest's darkness—by no means the conventional wild whisperings of ghosts—of something half-animal, half-man, fearsomely spoken of by such natives as inhabited the edges of that region, and referred to only by stubborn head-shakings among the Indians who occasionally came out of that country and made their way south. The forest had an evil reputation; it was nothing short of that; and already, before the turn of the century, it had a history that gave pause even to the most intrepid adventurer.

The first record of it was left in the writings of a missionary on his way through that country to come to the aid of a tribe of Indians reported to the post at Chequamegon Bay in the north to be starving. Fr. Piregard vanished, but the Indians later brought in his effects: a sandal, his rosary, and a prayerbook in which he had written certain curious words which had been carefully preserved: "I have the conviction that some creature is following me. I thought at first it was a bear, but I am now compelled to believe that it is something incredibly more monstrous than anything on this earth. Darkness is falling, and I believe I have developed a slight delirium, for I persist in hearing strange music and other curious sounds which can surely not derive from any natural source. There is also a disturbing illusion as of great footsteps which actually shake the earth, and I have several times encountered a very large footprint which varies in shape. . . ."

The second record is far more sinister. When Big Bob Hiller, one of the most rapacious lumber barons of the entire Midwest, began to encroach upon the Rick's Lake country in the middle of the last century, he could not fail to be impressed by the stand of pine in the area near the lake, and, though he did not own it, he followed the usual custom of the lumber barons and sent his men in from an adjoining piece he did own, under the intended explanation that he did not know where his line ran. Thirteen men failed to return from that first day's work on the edge of the forest area surrounding Rick's Lake; two of their bodies were never recovered; four were found—inconceivably—in the lake, several miles from where they had been cutting timber; the others were discovered at various places in the forest. Hiller thought he had a lumber war on his hands, laid his men off to mislead his unknown opponent, and then suddenly ordered them back to work in the forbidden region. After he had lost five more men, Hiller pulled out, and no hand since his time touched the forest, save for one or two individuals who took up land there and moved into the area.

One and all, these individuals moved out within a short time, saying little, but hinting much. Yet, the nature of their whispered hints was such that they were soon forced to abandon any explanation; so incredible were the tales they told, with overtones of something too horrible for description, of age-old evil which preceded anything dreamed of by even the most learned archaeologist. Only one of them vanished, and no trace of him was ever found. The others came back out of the forest and in the course of time were lost somewhere among other people in the United States—all save a half-breed known as Old Peter, who was obsessed with the idea that there were mineral deposits in the vicinity of the wood, and occasionally went to camp on its edge, being careful not to venture in.

It was inevitable that the Rick's Lake legends would ultimately reach the attention of Professor Upton Gardner of the state university; he had completed collections of Paul Bunyan, Whiskey Jack, and Hodag tales, and was engaged upon a compilation of place legends when he first encountered the curious half-forgotten tales that emanated from the region of Rick's Lake. I discovered later that his first reaction to them was one of casual interest; legends abound in out-of-the-way places, and there was nothing to indicate that these were of any more import than others. True, there was no similarity in the strictest sense of the word to the more familiar tales; for, while the

usual legends concerned themselves with ghostly appearances of men and animals, lost treasure, tribal beliefs, and the like, those of Rick's Lake were curiously unusual in their insistence upon utterly outré creatures—or "a creature"—since no one had ever reported seeing more than one even vaguely in the forest's darkness, half-man, half-beast, with always the hint that this description was inadequate in that it did injustice to the narrator's concept of what it was that lurked there in the vicinity of the lake. Nevertheless, Professor Gardner would in all probability have done little more than add the legends as he heard them to his collection, if it had not been for the reports—seemingly unconnected—of two curious facts, and the accidental discovery of a third.

The two facts were both newspaper accounts carried by Wisconsin papers within a week of each other. The first was a terse, half-comic report headed: SEA SERPENT IN WISCONSIN LAKE? and read: "Pilot Joseph X. Castleton, on test flight over northern Wisconsin yesterday, reported seeing a large animal of some kind bathing by night in a forest lake in the vicinity of Chequamegon. Castleton was caught in a thundershower and was flying low at the time, when, in an effort to ascertain his whereabouts, he looked down when lightning flashed, and saw what appeared to be a very large animal rising from the waters of a lake below him, and vanish into the forest. The pilot added no details to his story, but asserts that the creature he saw was not the Loch Ness monster." The second story was the utterly fantastic tale of the discovery of the body of Fr. Piregard, well-preserved, in the hollow trunk of a tree along the Brule River. At first called a lost member of the Marquette-Joliet Expedition, Fr. Piregard was quickly identified. To this report was appended a frigid statement by the president of the State Historical Society dismissing the discovery as a hoax.

The discovery Professor Gardner made was simply that an old friend was actually the owner of the abandoned lodge and most of the shore of Rick's Lake.

The sequence of events was thus clearly inevitable. Professor Gardner instantly associated both newspaper accounts with the Rick's Lake legends; this might not have been enough to stir him to drop his researches into the general mass of legends abounding in Wisconsin for specific research of quite another kind, but the occurrence of something even more astonishing

sent him posthaste to the owner of the abandoned lodge for permission to take the place over in the interests of science. What spurred him to take this action was nothing less than a request from the curator of the state museum to visit his office late one night and view a new exhibit which had arrived. He went there in the company of Laird Dorgan, and it was Laird who came to me.

But that was after Professor Gardner vanished.

For he did vanish; after sporadic reports from Rick's Lake over a period of three months, all word from the lodge ceased entirely, and nothing further was heard of Professor Upton Gardner.

Laird came to my room at the University Club late one night in October; his frank blue eyes were clouded, his lips tense, his brow furrowed, and there was everything to show that he was in a state of moderate excitation which did not derive from liquor. I assumed that he was working too hard; the first-period tests in his University of Wisconsin classes were just over; and Laird habitually took tests seriously—even as a student he had done so, and now as an instructor, he was doubly conscientious.

But it was not that. Professor Gardner had been missing almost a month now, and it was this which preyed on his mind. He said as much in so many words, adding, "Jack, I've got to go up there and see what I can do."

"Man, if the sheriff and the posse haven't discovered anything, what can you do?" I asked.

"For one thing, I know more than they do."

"If so, why didn't you tell them?"

"Because it's not the sort of thing they'd pay any attention to."

"Legends?"

"No."

He was looking at me speculatively, as if wondering whether he could trust me. I was suddenly conscious of the conviction that he *did* know something which he, at least, regarded with the gravest concern; and at the same time I had the most curious sensation of premonition and warning that I have ever experienced. In that instant the entire room seemed tense, the air electrified.

"If I go up there—do you think you could go along?"

"I guess I could manage."

"Good." He took a turn or two about the room, his eyes brooding, looking at me from time to time, still betraying uncertainty and an inability to make up his mind.

"Look, Laird—sit down and take it easy. That caged lion stuff isn't good for your nerves."

He took my advice; he sat down, covered his face with his hands, and shuddered. For a moment I was alarmed; but he snapped out of it in a few seconds, leaned back, and lit a cigarette.

"You know those legends about Rick's Lake, Jack?"

I assured him that I knew them and the history of the place from the beginning—as much as had been recorded.

"And those stories in the papers I mentioned to you . . . ?"

The stories, too. I remembered them since Laird had discussed with me their effect on his employer.

"That second one, about Fr. Piregard," he began, hesitated, stopped. But then, taking a deep breath, he began again. "You know, Gardner and I went over to the curator's office one night last spring."

"Yes, I was east at the time."

"Of course. Well, we went over there. The curator had something to show us. What do you think it was?"

"No idea. What was it?"

"That body in the tree!"

"No!"

"Gave us quite a jolt. There it was, hollow trunk and all, just the way it had been found. It had been shipped down to the museum for exhibition. But it was never exhibited, of course—for a very good reason. When Gardner saw it, he thought it was a waxwork. But it wasn't."

"You don't mean that it was the real thing?"

Laird nodded. "I know it's incredible."

"It's just not possible."

"Well, yes, I suppose it's impossible. But it was so. That's why it wasn't exhibited—just taken out and buried."

"I don't quite follow that."

He leaned forward and said very earnestly, "Because when it came in it had all the appearance of being completely preserved, as if by some natural embalming process. It wasn't. It was frozen. It began to thaw out that night.

And there were certain things about it that indicated that Fr. Piregard hadn't been dead the three centuries history said he had. The body began to go to pieces in a dozen ways—but no crumbling into dust, nothing like that. Gardner estimated that he hadn't been dead over five years. Where had he been in the meantime?"

He was quite sincere. I would not at first have believed it. But there was a certain disquieting earnestness about Laird that forbade any levity on my part. If I had treated his story as a joke, as I had the impulse to do, he would have shut up like a clam, and walked out of my room to brood about this thing in secret, with Lord knows what harm to himself. For a little while I said absolutely nothing.

"You don't believe it."

"I haven't said so."

"I can feel it."

"No. It's hard to take. Let's say I believe in your sincerity."

"That's fair enough," he said grimly. "Do you believe in me sufficiently to go along up to the lodge and find out what may have happened there?"

"Yes, I do."

"But I think you'd better read these excerpts from Gardner's letters first." He put them down on my desk like a challenge. He had copied them off onto a single sheet of paper, and as I took this up he went on, talking rapidly, explaining that the letters had been those written by Gardner from the lodge. When he finished, I turned to the excerpts and read.

> I cannot deny that there is about the lodge, the lake, even the forest an aura of evil, of impending danger—it is more than that, Laird, if I could explain it, but archaeology is my forte, and not fiction. For it would take fiction, I think, to do justice to this thing I feel. . . . Yes, there are times when I have the distinct feeling that *someone* or *something* is watching me out of the forest or from the lake—there does not seem to be a distinction as I would like to understand it, and while it does not make me uneasy, nevertheless it is enough to give me pause. I managed the other day to make contact with Old Peter, the half-breed. He was at the moment a little the worse for firewater, but when I mentioned the lodge and the forest to him, he drew into himself like a clam. But he did put words to it: he called

> it the Wendigo—you are familiar with this legend, which properly belongs to the French-Canadian country.

That was the first letter, written about a week after Gardner had reached the abandoned lodge on Rick's Lake. The second was extremely terse, and had been sent by special delivery.

> Will you wire Miskatonic University at Arkham, Massachusetts, to ascertain if there is available for study a photostatic copy of a book known as the *Necronomicon,* by an Arabian writer who signs himself Abdul Alhazred? Make inquiry also for the Pnakotic Manuscripts and the *Book of Eibon,* and determine whether it is possible to purchase through one of the local bookstores a copy of *The Outsider and Others,* by H. P. Lovecraft, published by Arkham House last year. I believe that these books individually and collectively may be helpful in determining just what it is that haunts this place. For there *is* something; make no mistake about that; I am convinced of it, and when I tell you that I believe it has lived here not for years, but for centuries—perhaps even before the time of man—you will understand that I may be on the threshold of great discoveries.

Startling as this letter was, the third was even more so. For an interval of a fortnight went by between the second and third letters, and it was apparent that something had happened to threaten Professor Gardner's composure, for his third letter was even in this selected excerpt marked by extreme perturbation.

> Everything evil here. . . . I don't know whether it is the Black Goat with a Thousand Young or the Faceless One and/or something more that rides the wind. For God's sake . . . those accursed fragments! . . . Something in the lake, too, and at night the sounds! How still, and then suddenly those horrible flutes, those watery ululations! Not a bird, not an animal then—only those ghastly sounds. And the voices! . . . Or is it but dream? Is it my own voice I hear in the darkness? . . .

I found myself increasingly shaken as I read those excerpts. Certain implications and hints lodged between the lines of what Professor Gardner had written were suggestive of terrible, ageless evil, and I felt that there was opening up before Laird Dorgan and myself an adventure so incredible, so bizarre, and so unbelievably dangerous that we might well not return to tell it. Yet even then there was a lurking doubt in my mind that we would say anything about what we found at Rick's Lake.

"What do you say?" asked Laird impatiently.

"I'm going."

"Good! Everything's ready. I've even got a dictaphone and batteries enough to run it. I've arranged for the sheriff of the county at Pashepaho to replace Gardner's notes, and leave everything just the way it was."

"A dictaphone," I broke in. "What for?"

"Those sounds he wrote about—we can settle that once and for all. If they're there to be heard, the dictaphone will record them; if they're just imagination, it won't." He paused, his eyes very grave. "You know, Jack, we may not come out of this thing."

"I know."

I did not say so, because I knew that Laird, too, felt the same way I did: that we were going like two dwarfed Davids to face an adversary greater than any Goliath, an adversary invisible and unknown, who bore no name and was shrouded in legend and fear, a dweller not only of the darkness of the wood but in that greater darkness which the mind of man has sought to explore since his dawn.

II

SHERIFF COWAN WAS at the lodge when we arrived. Old Peter was with him. The sheriff was a tall, saturnine individual clearly of Yankee stock; though representing the fourth generation of his family in the area, he spoke with a twang which doubtless had persisted from generation to generation. The half-breed was a dark-skinned, ill-kempt fellow; he had a way of saying little, and from time to time grinned or snickered as at some secret joke.

"I brung up express that come some time past for the professor," said the sheriff. "From some place in Massachusetts was one of 'em, and the

other from down near Madison. Didn't seem t' me 'twas worth sendin' back. So I took and brung 'em with the keys. Don't know that you fellers 'll git anyw'eres. My posse and me went through the hull woods, didn't see a thing."

"You ain't tellin' 'em everything," put in the half-breed, grinning.

"Ain't no more to tell."

"What about the carvin'?"

The sheriff shrugged irritably. "Damn it, Peter, that ain't got nothin' to do with the professor's disappearance."

"He made a drawin' of it, didn't he?"

So pressed, the sheriff confided that two members of his posse had stumbled upon a great slab or rock in the center of the wood; it was mossy and overgrown, but there was upon it an odd drawing, plainly as old as the forest—probably the work of one of the primitive Indian tribes once known to inhabit northern Wisconsin before the Dacotah Sioux and the Winnebago—

Old Peter grunted with contempt. "No Indian drawing."

The sheriff shook this off and went on. The drawing represented some kind of creature, but no one could tell what it was; it was certainly not a man, but on the other hand, it did not seem to be hairy, like a beast. Moreover, the unknown artist had forgotten to put in a face.

"'N beside it there wuz two things," said the half-breed.

"Don't pay no attention to him," said the sheriff then.

"What two things?" demanded Laird.

"Jest things," replied the half-breed, snickering. "Heh, heh! Ain't no other way to tell it—warn't human, warn't animal, jest things."

Cowan was irritated. He became suddenly brusque; he ordered the half-breed to keep still, and went on to say that if we needed him, he would be at his office in Pashepaho. He did not explain how we were to make contact with him, since there was no telephone at the lodge, but plainly he had no high regard for the legends abounding about the area into which we had ventured with such determination. The half-breed regarded us with an almost stolid indifference, broken only by his sly grin from time to time, and his dark eyes examined our luggage with keen speculation and interest. Laird met his gaze occasionally, and each time Old Peter indolently shifted his eyes. The sheriff went on talking; the notes and drawings the missing man

had made were on the desk he had used in the big room which made up almost the entire ground floor of the lodge, just where he had found them; they were the property of the State of Wisconsin and were to be returned to the sheriff's office when we had finished with them. At the threshold he turned for a parting shot to say he hoped we would not be staying too long, because "While I ain't givin' in to any of them crazy ideas—it jest ain't been so healthy for some of the people who came here."

"The half-breed knows or suspects something," said Laird at once. "We'll have to get in touch with him sometime when the sheriff's not around."

"Didn't Gardner write that he was pretty close-mouthed when it came to concrete data?"

"Yes, but he indicated the way out. Firewater."

We went to work and settled ourselves, storing our food supplies, setting up the dictaphone, getting things into readiness for a stay of at least a fortnight; our supplies were sufficient for this length of time, and if we had to remain longer, we could always go into Pashepaho for more food. Moreover, Laird had brought fully two dozen dictaphone cylinders, so that we had plenty of them for an indefinite time, particularly since we did not intend to use them except when we slept—and this would not be often, for we had agreed that one of us would watch while the other took his rest, an arrangement we were not sanguine enough to believe would hold good without fail, hence the machine. It was not until after we had settled our belongings that we turned to the things the sheriff had brought, and meanwhile, we had ample opportunity to become aware of the very definite aura of the place.

For it was not imagination that there was a strange aura about the lodge and the grounds. It was not alone the brooding, almost sinister stillness, not alone the tall pines encroaching upon the lodge, not alone the blue-black waters of the lake, but something more than that: a hushed, almost menacing air of waiting, a kind of aloof assurance that was ominous—as one might imagine a hawk might feel leisurely cruising above prey it knows will not escape its talons. Nor was this a fleeting impression, for it was obvious almost at once, and it grew with sure steadiness throughout the hour or so that we worked there; moreover, it was so plainly to be felt, that Laird commented upon it as if he had long ago accepted it, and knew that I too had done so!

Yet there was nothing primary to which this could be attributed. There are thousands of lakes like Rick's in northern Wisconsin and Minnesota, and while many of them are not in forest areas, those which are do not differ greatly in their physical aspects from Rick's; so there was nothing in the appearance of the place which at all contributed to the brooding sense of horror which seemed to invade us from outside. Indeed, the setting was rather the opposite; under the afternoon sunlight, the old lodge, the lake, the high forest all around, had a pleasant air of seclusion—an air which made the contrast with the intangible aura of evil all the more pointed and fearsome. The fragrance of the pines, together with the freshness of the water, served also to emphasize the intangible mood of menace.

We turned at last to the material left on Professor Gardner's desk. The express packages contained, as expected, a copy of *The Outsider and Others,* by H. P. Lovecraft, shipped by the publishers, and photostatic copies of manuscript and printed pages taken from the *R'lyeh Text* and Ludvig Prinn's *De Vermis Mysteriis*—apparently sent for to supplement the earlier data dispatched to the professor by the librarian of Miskatonic University, for we found among the material brought back by the sheriff certain pages from the *Necronomicon,* in the translation by Olaus Wormius, and likewise from the Pnakotic Manuscripts. But it was not these pages, which for the most part were unintelligible to us, which held our attention. It was the fragmentary notes left by Professor Gardner.

It was quite evident that he had not had time to do more than put down such questions and thoughts as had occurred to him, and, while there was little assimilation manifest, yet there was about what he had written a certain terrible suggestiveness which grew to colossal proportions as everything he had not put down became obvious.

"Is the slab a) only an ancient ruin, b) a marker similar to a tomb, c) or a focal point for Him? If the latter, from outside? Or from beneath? (NB: Nothing to show that the thing has been disturbed.)

"Cthulhu or Kthulhut. In Rick's Lake? Subterrene passage to Superior and the sea via the St. Lawrence? (NB: Except for the aviator's story, nothing to show that the Thing has anything to do with the water. Probably not one of the water beings.)

"Hastur. But manifestations do not seem to have been of air beings either.

"Yog-Sothoth. Of earth certainly—but he is not the 'Dweller in Darkness.' (NB: The Thing, whatever it is, must be of the earth deities, even though it travels in time and space. It could possibly be more than one, of which only the earth being is occasionally visible. Ithaqua, perhaps?)

"'Dweller in Darkness.' Could He be the same as the Blind, Faceless One? He could be truly said to be dwelling in darkness. Nyarlathotep? Or Shub-Niggurath?

"What of fire? There must be a deity here, too. But no mention. (NB: Presumably, if the Earth and Water Beings oppose those of Air, then they must oppose those of Fire as well. Yet there is evidence here and there to show that there is more constant struggle between Air and Water Beings than between those of Earth and Air. Abdul Alhazred is damnably obscure in places. There is no clue as to the identity of Cthugha in that terrible footnote.)

"Partier says I am on the wrong track. I'm not convinced. Whoever it is that plays the music in the night is a master of hellish cadence and rhythm. And, yes, of cacophony. (Cf. Bierce and Chambers.)"

That was all.

"What incredible gibberish!" I exclaimed.

And yet—and yet I knew instinctively it was not gibberish. Strange things had happened here, things which demanded an explanation which was not terrestrial; and here, in Gardner's handwriting, was evidence to show that he had not only arrived at the same conclusion, but passed it. However it might sound, Gardner had written it in all seriousness, and clearly for his own use alone, since only the vaguest and most suggestive outline seemed apparent. Moreover, the notes had a startling effect on Laird; he had gone quite pale, and now stood looking down as if he could not believe what he had seen.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Jack—he was in contact with Partier."

"It doesn't register," I answered, but even as I spoke I remembered the hush-hush that had attended the severing of old Professor Partier's connection with the University of Wisconsin. It had been given out to the press that the old man had been somewhat too liberal in his lectures in anthropology—that is, he had "Communistic leanings!"—which everyone who knew Partier realized was far from the facts. But he had said strange things

in his lectures, he had talked of horrible, forbidden matters, and it had been thought best to let him out quietly. Unfortunately, Partier went out trumpeting in his contemptuous manner, and it had been difficult to hush the matter up satisfactorily.

"He's living down in Wausau now," said Laird.

"Do you suppose he could translate all this?" I asked and knew that I had echoed the thought in Laird's mind.

"He's three hours away by car. We'll copy these notes, and if nothing happens—if we can't discover anything, we'll go to see him."

If nothing happened—!

If the lodge by day had seemed brooding in an air of ominousness, by night it seemed surcharged with menace. Moreover, events began to take place with disarming and insidious suddenness, beginning in mid-evening, when Laird and I were sitting over those curious photostats sent out by Miskatonic University in lieu of the books and manuscripts themselves, which were far too valuable to permit out of their haven. The first manifestation was so simple that for some time neither of us noticed its strangeness. It was simply the sound in the trees as of rising wind, the growing song among the pines. The night was warm, and all the windows of the lodge stood open. Laird commented on the wind, and went on giving voice to his perplexity regarding the fragments before us. Not until half an hour had gone by and the sound of the wind had risen to the proportions of a gale did it occur to Laird that something was wrong, and he looked up, his eyes going from one open window to another in growing apprehension. Then I, too, became aware.

Despite the tumult of the wind, no draft of air had circulated in the room, not one of the light curtains at the window was so much as trembling!

With one simultaneous movement, both of us stepped out upon the broad verandah of the lodge.

There was no wind, no breath of air stirring to touch our hands and faces. There was only the sound in the forest. And both of us looked up to where the pines were silhouetted against the starswept heavens, expecting their tops would be bending before a high gale; but there was no movement whatever; the pines stood still, motionless; and the sound as of wind con-

tinued all around us. We stood on the verandah for half an hour, vainly attempting to determine the source of the sound—and then, as unobtrusively as it had begun, it stopped!

The hour was now approaching midnight, and Laird prepared for bed; he had slept little the previous night, and we had agreed that I was to take the first watch until four in the morning. Neither of us said much about the sound in the pines, but what was said indicated a desire to believe that there was a natural explanation for the phenomenon, if we could establish a point of contact for understanding. It was inevitable, I suppose, that even in the face of all the curious facts which had come to our attention, there should still be an earnest wish to find a natural explanation. Certainly the oldest fear and the greatest fear to which man is prey is fear of the unknown; anything capable of rationalization and explanation cannot be feared; but it was growing hourly more patent that we were facing something which defied all known rationales and credos, but hinged upon a system of belief that antedated even primitive man, and indeed, as scattered hints within the photostat pages from Miskatonic University suggested, antedated even earth itself. And there was always that brooding terror, the ominous suggestion of menace from something far beyond the grasp of such a puny intelligence as man's.

Thus it was with some trepidation that I prepared for my vigil. After Laird had gone to his room, which was at the head of the stairs, with a door opening upon a railed-in balcony looking down into the lodge room where I sat with the book by Lovecraft, reading here and there in its pages, I settled down to a kind of apprehensive waiting. It was not that I was afraid of what might take place, but rather that I was afraid that what took place might be beyond my understanding. However, as the minutes ticked past, I became engrossed in *The Outsider and Others,* with its hellish suggestions of eon-old evil, of entities co-existent with all time and conterminous with all space, and began to understand, however vaguely, a relation between the writings of this fantasist and the curious notes Professor Gardner had made. The most disturbing factor in this cognizance was the knowledge that Professor Gardner had made his notes independent of the book I now read, since it had arrived after his disappearance. Moreover, though there were certain keys to what Gardner had written in the first material he had received

from Miskatonic University, there was growing now a mass of evidence to indicate that the professor had had access to some other source of information.

What was that source? Could he have learned something from Old Peter? Hardly likely. Could he have gone to Partier? It was not impossible that he had done so, though he had not imparted this information to Laird. Yet it was not to be ruled out that he had made contact with still another source of which there was no hint among his notes.

It was while I was engaged in this engrossing speculation that I became conscious of the music. It may actually have been sounding for some time before I heard it, but I do not think so. It was a curious melody that was being played, beginning as something lulling and harmonious, and then subtly becoming cacophonous and demoniac, rising in tempo, though all the time coming as from a great distance. I listened to it with growing astonishment; I was not at first aware of the sense of evil which fell upon me the moment I stepped outside and became cognizant that the music emanated from the depths of the dark forest. There, too, I was sharply conscious of its weirdness; the melody was unearthly, utterly bizarre and foreign, and the instruments which were being used seemed to be flutes, or certainly some variation of flutes.

Up to that moment there was no really alarming manifestation. That is, there was nothing but the suggestiveness of the two events which had taken place to inspire fear. There was, in short, always a good possibility that there might be a natural explanation about the sound as of wind and that of music.

But now, suddenly, there occurred something so utterly horrible, something so fraught with terror, that I was at once made prey to the most terrible fear known to man, a surging primitive horror of the unknown, of something from outside—for if I had had doubts about the things suggested by Gardner's notes and the material accompanying them, I knew instinctively that they were unfounded, for the sound that succeeded the strains of that unearthly music was of such a nature that it defied description, and defies it even now. It was simply a ghastly ululation, made by no beast known to man, and certainly by no man. It rose to an awful crescendo and fell away into a silence that was all the more terrible for this soul-searing crying. It began with a two-note call, twice repeated, a frightful sound:

"Ygnaiih! Ygnaiih!" and then became a triumphant wailing cry that ululated out of the forest and into the dark night like the hideous voice of the pit itself: *"Eh-ya-ya-ya-yahaaahaaahaaahaaa-ah-ah-ah-ngh'aaaa-ngh'aaa-ya-ya-ya . . ."*

I stood for a minute absolutely frozen to the verandah. I could not have uttered a sound if it had been necessary to save my life. The voice had ceased, but the trees still seemed to echo its frightful syllables. I heard Laird tumble from his bed, I heard him running down the stairs calling my name, but I could not answer. He came out on the verandah and caught hold of my arm.

"Good God! What was that?"

"Did you hear it?"

"I heard enough."

We stood waiting for it to sound again, but there was no repetition of it. Nor was there a repetition of the music. We returned to the sitting room and waited there, neither of us able to sleep.

But there was not another manifestation of any kind throughout the remainder of that night!

III

THE OCCURRENCES of that first night more than anything else decided our direction on the following day. For, realizing that we were too ill-informed to cope with any understanding with what was taking place, Laird set the dictaphone for that second night, and we started out for Wausau and Professor Partier, planning to return on the following day. With forethought, Laird carried with him our copy of the notes Gardner had left, skeletal as they were.

Professor Partier, at first reluctant to see us, admitted us finally to his study in the heart of the Wisconsin city, and cleared books and papers from two chairs so that we could sit down. Though he had the appearance of an old man, wore a long white beard, and a fringe of white hair straggled from under his black skullcap, he was as agile as a young man; he was thin, his fingers were bony, his face gaunt, with deep black eyes, and his features were set in an expression that was one of profound cynicism, disdainful, almost contemptuous, and he made no effort to make us comfortable, beyond providing places for us to sit. He recognized Laird as Professor Gardner's secretary,

said brusquely that he was a busy man preparing what would doubtless be his last book for his publishers, and he would be obliged to us if we would state the object of our visit as concisely as possible.

"What do you know of Cthulhu?" asked Laird bluntly.

The professor's reaction was astonishing. From an old man whose entire attitude had been one of superiority and aloof disdain, he became instantly wary and alert; with exaggerated care he put down the pencil he had been holding, his eyes never once left Laird's face, and he leaned forward a little over his desk.

"So," he said, "you come to me." He laughed then, a laugh which was like the cackling of some centenarian. "You come to me to ask about Cthulhu. Why?"

Laird explained curtly that we were bent upon discovering what had happened to Professor Gardner. He told as much as he thought necessary, while the old man closed his eyes, picked up his pencil once more, and tapping gently with it, listened with marked care, prompting Laird from time to time. When he had finished, Professor Partier opened his eyes slowly and looked from one to the other of us with an expression that was not unlike one of pity mixed with pain.

"So he mentioned me, did he? But I had no contact with him other than one telephone call." He pursed his lips. "He had more reference to an earlier controversy than to his discoveries at Rick's Lake. I would like now to give you a little advice."

"That's what we came for."

"Go away from that place, and forget all about it."

Laird shook his head in determination.

Partier estimated him, his dark eyes challenging his decision; but Laird did not falter. He had embarked upon this venture, and he meant to see it through.

"These are not forces with which common men have been accustomed to deal," said the old man then. "We are frankly not equipped to do so." He began then, without other preamble, to talk of matters so far removed from the mundane as to be almost beyond conception. Indeed, it was some time before I began to comprehend what he was hinting at, for his concept was so broad and breathtaking that it was difficult for anyone accustomed to so prosaic an existence as mine to grasp. Perhaps it was because Partier began

obliquely by suggesting that it was not Cthulhu or his minions who haunted Rick's Lake, but clearly another; the existence of the slab and what was carved upon it clearly indicated the nature of the being who dwelled there from time to time. Professor Gardner had in final analysis got on to the right path, despite thinking that Partier did not believe it. Who was the Blind, Faceless One but Nyarlathotep? Certainly not Shub-Niggurath, the Black Goat of a Thousand Young.

Here Laird interrupted him to press for something more understandable, and then at last, realizing that we knew nothing, the professor went on, still in that vaguely irritable oblique manner, to expound mythology—a mythology of pre-human life not only on the earth, but on the stars of all the universe. "We know nothing," he repeated from time to time. "We know nothing at all. But there are certain signs, certain shunned places. Rick's Lake is one of them." He spoke of beings whose very names were awesome—of the Elder Gods who live on Betelgeuse, remote in time and space, who had cast out into space the Great Old Ones, led by Azathoth and Yog-Sothoth, and numbering among them the primal spawn of the amphibious Cthulhu, the bat-like followers of Hastur the Unspeakable, of Lloigor, Zhar, and Ithaqua, who walked the winds and interstellar space, the earth beings, Nyarlathotep and Shub-Niggurath—the evil beings who sought always to triumph once more over the Elder Gods, who had shut them out or imprisoned them—as Cthulhu long ago slept in the ocean realm of R'lyeh, as Hastur was imprisoned upon a black star near Aldebaran in the Hyades. Long before human beings walked the earth, the conflict between the Elder Gods and the Great Old Ones had taken place; and from time to time the Old Ones had made a resurgence toward power, sometimes to be stopped by direct interference by the Elder Gods, but more often by the agency of human or non-human beings serving to bring about a conflict among the beings of the elements, for, as Gardner's notes indicated, the evil Old Ones were elemental forces. And every time there had been a resurgence, the mark of it had been left deep upon man's memory—though every attempt was made to eliminate the evidence and quiet survivors.

"What happened at Innsmouth, Massachusetts, for instance?" he asked tensely. "What took place at Dunwich? In the wilds of Vermont? At the old Tuttle house on the Aylesbury pike? What of the mysterious cult of Cthulhu, and the utterly strange voyage of exploration to the Mountains of

Madness? What beings dwelt on the hidden and shunned Plateau of Leng? And what of Kadath in the Cold Waste? Lovecraft knew! Gardner and many another have sought to discover those secrets, to link the incredible happenings which have taken place here and there on the face of the planet—but it is not desired by the Old Ones that mere man shall know too much. Be warned!"

He took up Gardner's notes without giving either of us a chance to say anything, and studied them, putting on a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles which made him look more ancient than ever, and going on talking, more to himself than to us, saying that it was held that the Old Ones had achieved a higher degree of development in some aspects of science than was hitherto believed possible, but that, of course, nothing was *known.* The way in which he consistently emphasized this indicated very clearly that only a fool or an idiot would disbelieve, proof or no proof. But in the next sentence, he admitted that there was certain proof—the revolting and bestial plaque bearing a representation of a hellish monstrosity walking on the winds above the earth found in the hand of Josiah Alwyn when his body was discovered on a small Pacific island months after his incredible disappearance from his home in Wisconsin; the drawings made by Professor Gardner—and, even more than anything else, that curious slab of carven stone in the forest at Rick's Lake.

"Cthugha," he murmured then, wonderingly. "I've not read the footnote to which he makes reference. And there's nothing in Lovecraft." He shook his head. "No, I don't know." He looked up. "Can you frighten something out of the half-breed?"

"We've thought of that," admitted Laird.

"Well, now, I advise a try. It seems evident that he knows something—it may be nothing but an exaggeration to which his more or less primitive mind has lent itself; but on the other hand—who can say?"

More than this Professor Partier could not or would not tell us. Moreover, Laird was reluctant to ask, for there was obviously a damnably disturbing connection between what he had revealed, however incredible it might be, and what Professor Gardner had written.

Our visit, however, despite its inconclusiveness—or perhaps because of it—had a curious effect on us. The very indefiniteness of the professor's summary and comments, coupled with such fragmentary and disjointed ev-

idence which had come to us independently of Partier, sobered us and increased Laird's determination to get to the bottom of the mystery surrounding Gardner's disappearance, a mystery which had now become enlarged to encompass the greater mystery of Rick's Lake and the forest around it.

On the following day we returned to Pashepaho, and as luck would have it, we passed Old Peter on the road leading from town. Laird slowed down, backed up, and leaned out to meet the old fellow's speculative gaze.

"Lift?"

"Reckon so."

Old Peter got in and sat on the edge of the seat until Laird unceremoniously produced a flask and offered it to him. Then his eyes lit up; he took it eagerly and drank deeply, while Laird made small talk about life in the north woods and encouraged the half-breed to talk about the mineral deposits he thought he could find in the vicinity of Rick's Lake. In this way some distance was covered, and during this time, the half-breed retained the flask, handing it back at last when it was almost empty. He was not intoxicated in the strictest sense of the word, but he was uninhibited, and he made no protest when we took the lake road without stopping to let him out, though when he saw the lodge and knew where he was, he said thickly that he was off his route and had to be getting back before dark.

He would have started back immediately, but Laird persuaded him to come in with the promise that he would mix him a drink.

He did. He mixed him as stiff a drink as he could, and Peter downed it.

Not until he had begun to feel its effects did Laird turn to the subject of what Peter knew about the mystery of the Rick's Lake country, and instantly then the half-breed became close-mouthed, mumbling that he would say nothing, he had seen nothing, it was all a mistake, his eyes shifting from one to the other of us. But Laird persisted. He had seen the slab of carven stone, hadn't he? Yes—reluctantly. Would he take us to it? Peter shook his head violently. Not now. It was nearly dark, it might be dark before they could return.

But Laird was adamant, and finally the half-breed, convinced by Laird's insistence that they could return to the lodge and even to Pashepaho, if Peter liked, before darkness fell, consented to lead us to the slab. Then, despite

his unsteadiness, he set off swiftly into the woods along a lane that could hardly be called a trail, so faint it was, and loped along steadily for almost a mile before he drew up short and, standing behind a tree, as if he were afraid of being seen, pointed shakily to a little open spot surrounded by high trees at enough of a distance that ample sky was visible overhead.

"There—that's it."

The slab was only partly visible, for moss had grown over much of it. Laird, however, was at the moment only secondarily interested in it; it was manifest that the half-breed stood in mortal terror of the spot and wished only to escape.

"How would you like to spend the night here, Peter?" asked Laird.

The half-breed shot a frightened glance at him. "Me? Gawd, no!"

Suddenly Laird's voice steeled. "Unless you tell us what it was you saw here, that's what you're going to do."

The half-breed was not so much the worse for liquor that he could not foresee events—the possibility that Laird and I might overcome him and tie him to a tree at the edge of this open space. Plainly, he considered a bolt for it, but he knew that in his condition, he could not outrun us.

"Don't make me tell," he said. "It ain't supposed to be told. I ain't never told no one—not even the professor."

"We want to know, Peter," said Laird with no less menace.

The half-breed began to shake; he turned and looked at the slab as if he thought at any moment an inimical being might rise from it and advance upon him with lethal intent. "I can't, I can't," he muttered, and then, forcing his bloodshot eyes to meet Laird's once more, he said in a low voice, "I don't know what it was. Gawd! it was awful. It was a Thing—didn't have no face, hollered there till I thought my eardrums 'd bust, and them things that was with it—Gawd!" He shuddered and backed away from the tree, toward us. "Honest t' Gawd, I seen it there one night. It jist come, seems like, out of the air and there it was a-singin' and a-wailin' and them things playin' that damn music. I guess I was crazy for a while afore I got away." His voice broke, his vivid memory recreated what he had seen; he turned, shouting harshly, "Let's git outa here!" and ran back the way we had come, weaving among the trees.

Laird and I ran after him, catching up easily, Laird reassuring him that we would take him out of the woods in the car, and he would be well away

from the forest's edge before darkness overtook him. He was as convinced as I that there was nothing imagined about the half-breed's account, that he had indeed told us all he knew; and he was silent all the way back from the highway to which we took Old Peter, pressing five dollars upon him so that he could forget what he had seen in liquor if he were so inclined.

"What do you think?" asked Laird when we reached the lodge once more.

I shook my head.

"That wailing night before last," said Laird. "The sounds Professor Gardner heard—and now this. It ties up—damnably, horribly." He turned on me with intense and fixed urgency, "Jack, are you game to visit that slab tonight?"

"Certainly."

"We'll do it."

It was not until we were inside the lodge that we thought of the dictaphone, and then Laird prepared at once to play whatever had been recorded back to us. Here at least, he reflected, was nothing dependent in any way upon anyone's imagination; here was the product of the machine, pure and simple, and everyone of intelligence knew full well that machines were far more dependable than men, having neither nerves nor imagination, knowing neither fear nor hope. I think that at most we counted upon hearing a repetition of the sounds of the previous night; not in our wildest dreams did we look forward to what we did actually hear, for the record mounted from the prosaic to the incredible, from the incredible to the horrible, and at last to a cataclysmic revelation that left us completely cut away from every credo of normal existence.

It began with the occasional singing of loons and owls, followed by a period of silence. Then there was once more that familiar rushing sound, as of wind in the trees, and this was followed by the curious cacophonous piping of flutes. Then there was recorded a series of sounds, which I put down here exactly as we heard them in that unforgettable evening hour:

Ygnaiih! Ygnaiih! EEE-ya-ya-ya-yahaahaaahaaa-ah-ah-ah-ngh'aaa-ngh'aaa-ya-ya-yaaa! (In a voice that was neither human nor bestial, but yet of both.)

(An increased tempo in the music, becoming more wild and demoniac.)

Mighty Messenger—Nyarlathotep . . . from the world of Seven Suns to his earth place, the Wood of N'gai, whither may come Him Who Is Not to be Named. . . . There shall be abundance of those from the Black Goat of the Woods, the Goat with the Thousand Young. . . . (In a voice that was curiously human.)

(A succession of odd sounds, as if audience-response: a buzzing and humming, as of telegraph wires.)

Iä! Iä! Shub-Niggurath! Ygnaiih! Ygnaiih! EEE-yaa-yaa—haa-haaa-haaaa! (In the original voice neither human nor beast, yet both.)

Ithaqua shall serve thee, Father of the million favored ones, and Zhar shall be summoned from Arcturus, by the command of 'Umr At-Tawil, Guardian of the Gate. . . . Ye shall unite in praise of Azathoth, of Great Cthulhu, of Tsathoggua. . . . (The human voice again.)

Go forth in his form or in whatever form chosen in the guise of man, and destroy that which may lead them to us. . . . (The half-bestial, half-human voice once more.)

(An interlude of furious piping, accompanied once again by a sound as of the flapping of great wings.)

Ygnaiih! Y'bthnk . . . h'ehye-n'grkdl'lh . . . Iä! Iä! Iä! (Like a chorus.)

These sounds had been spaced in such a way that it seemed as if the beings giving rise to them were moving about within or around the lodge, and the last choral chanting faded away, as if the creatures were departing. Indeed, there followed such an interval of silence that Laird had actually moved to shut off the machine when once again a voice came from it. But the voice that now emanated from the dictaphone was one which, simply because of its nature, brought to a climax all the horror so cumulative in what had gone before it; for whatever had been inferred by the half-bestial bellowings and chants, the horribly suggestive conversation in accented English, that which now came from the dictaphone was unutterably terrible:

Dorgan! Laird Dorgan! Can you hear me?

A hoarse, urgent whisper calling out to my companion, who sat white-faced now, staring at the machine above which his hand was still poised. Our eyes met. It was not the appeal, it was not everything that had gone before,

it was the identity of that voice—*for it was the voice of Professor Upton Gardner!* But we had no time to ponder this, for the dictaphone went mechanically on.

> "Listen to me! Leave this place. Forget. But before you go, summon Cthugha. For centuries this has been the place where evil beings from outermost cosmos have touched upon earth. I know. I am theirs. They have taken me, as they took Piregard and many others—all who came unwarily within their wood and whom they did not at once destroy. It is His wood—the Wood of N'gai, the terrestrial abode of the Blind, Faceless One, the Howler in the Night, the Dweller in Darkness, Nyarlathotep, who fears only Cthugha. I have been with him in the star spaces. I have been on the shunned Plateau of Leng—to Kadath in the Cold Waste, beyond the Gates of the Silver Key, even to Kythamil near Arcturus and Mnar, to N'kai and the Lake of Hali, to K'n-yan and fabled Carcosa, to Yaddith and Y'ha-nthlei near Innsmouth, to Yoth and Yuggoth, and from far off I have looked upon Zothique, from the eye of Algol. When Fomalhaut has topped the trees, call forth to Cthugha in these words, thrice repeated: *Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthugha Fomalhaut n'gha-ghaa naf'l thagn! Iä! Cthugha!* When He has come, go swiftly, lest you too be destroyed. For it is fitting that this accursed spot be blasted so that Nyarlathotep comes no more out of interstellar space. Do you hear me, Dorgan? Do you hear me? Dorgan! Laird Dorgan!"

There was a sudden sound of sharp protest, followed by a scuffling and tearing noise, as if Gardner had been forcibly removed, and then silence, utter and complete!

For a few moments longer Laird let the record run, but there was nothing more, and finally he started it over, saying tensely, "I think we'd better copy that as best we can. You take every other speech, and let's both copy that formula from Gardner."

"Was it . . . ?"

"I'd know his voice anywhere," he said shortly.

"He's alive then?"

He looked at me, his eyes narrowed. "We don't know that."

"But his voice!"

He shook his head, for the sounds were coming forth once more, and both of us had to bend to the task of copying, which was easier than it promised to be, for the spaces between speeches were great enough to enable us to copy without undue haste. The language of the chants and the words to Cthugha enunciated by Gardner's voice offered extreme difficulty, but by means of repeated playings, we managed to put down the approximate equivalent of the sounds. When finally we had finished, Laird shut the dictaphone off and looked at me with quizzical and troubled eyes, grave with concern and uncertainty. I said nothing; what we had just heard, added to everything that had gone before, left us no alternative. There was room for doubt about legends, beliefs, and the like—but the infallible record of the dictaphone was conclusive even if it did no more than verify half-heard credos—for it was true, there was still nothing definite; it was as if the whole were so completely beyond the comprehension of man that only in the oblique suggestion of its individual parts could something like understanding be achieved, as if the entirety were too unspeakably soul-searing for the mind of man to withstand.

"Fomalhaut rises almost at sunset—a little before, I think," mused Laird—clearly, like myself, he had accepted what we had heard without challenge other than the mystery surrounding its meaning. "It should be above the trees—presumably twenty to thirty degrees above the horizon, because it doesn't pass near enough to the zenith in this latitude to appear above these pines—at approximately an hour after darkness falls. Say nine-thirty or so."

"You aren't thinking of trying it tonight?" I asked. "After all—what does it mean? Who or what is Cthugha?"

"I don't know any more than you. And I'm not trying it tonight. You've forgotten the slab. Are you still game to go out there—after this?"

I nodded. I did not trust myself to speak, but I was not consumed by any eagerness whatever to dare the darkness that lingered like a living entity within the forest surrounding Rick's Lake.

Laird looked at his watch, and then at me, his eyes burning now with a kind of feverish determination, as if he were forcing himself to take this final step to face the unknown being whose manifestations had made the

woods its own. If he expected me to hesitate, he was disappointed; however beset by fear I might be, I would not show it. I got up and went out of the lodge at his side.

IV

THERE ARE ASPECTS of hidden life, exterior as well as of the depths of the mind, that are better kept secret and away from the awareness of common man; for there lurk in dark places of the earth horrible revenants belonging to a stratum of the subconscious which is mercifully beyond the apprehension of common man—indeed, there are aspects of creation so grotesquely shuddersome that the very sight of them would blast the sanity of the beholder. Fortunately, it is not possible even to bring back in anything but suggestion what we saw on the slab in the forest at Rick's Lake that night in October, for the thing was so unbelievable, transcending all known laws of science, that adequate words for its description have no existence in the language.

We arrived at the belt of trees around the slab while afterglow yet lingered in the western heavens, and by the illumination of a flashlight Laird carried, we examined the face of the slab itself, and the carving on it: of a vast, amorphous creature, drawn by an artist who evidently lacked sufficient imagination to etch the creature's face, for it had none, bearing only a curious, cone-like head which even in stone seemed to have a fluidity which was unnerving; moreover, the creature was depicted as having both tentacle-like appendages and hands—or growths similar to hands, not only two, but several; so that it seemed both human and non-human in its structure. Beside it had been carved two squat squid-like figures from a part of which—presumably the heads, though no outline was definitive—projected what must certainly have been instruments of some kind, for the strange, repugnant attendants appeared to be playing them.

Our examination was necessarily hurried, for we did not want to risk being seen here by whatever might come, and it may be that in the circumstances, imagination got the better of us. But I do not think so. It is difficult to maintain that consistently, sitting here at my desk, removed in space and time from what happened there; but I do maintain it. Despite the quickened awareness and irrational fear of the unknown which obsessed both of us, we

kept a determined open-mindedness about every aspect of the problem we had chosen to solve. If anything, I have erred in this account on the side of science over that of imagination. In the plain light of reason, the carvings on that stone slab were not only obscene, but bestial and frightening beyond measure, particularly in the light of what Partier had hinted, and what Gardner's notes and the material from Miskatonic University had vaguely outlined, and even if time had permitted, it is doubtful if we could have looked long upon them.

We retreated to a spot comparatively near the way we must take to return to the lodge, and yet not too far from the open place where the slab lay, so that we might see clearly and still remain hidden in a place easy of access to the return path. There we took our stand and waited in that chilling hush of an October evening, while stygian darkness encompassed us, and only one or two stars twinkled high overhead, miraculously visible among the towering treetops.

According to Laird's watch, we waited exactly an hour and ten minutes before the sound as of wind began, and at once there was a manifestation which had about it all the trappings of the supernatural; for no sooner had the rushing sound begun, than the slab we had so quickly quitted began to glow—at first so indistinguishably that it seemed an illusion, and then with a phosphorescence of increasing brilliance, until it gave off such a glow that it was as if a pillar of light extended upward into the heavens. This was the second curious circumstance—the light followed the outlines of the slab, and flowed upward; it was not diffused and dispersed around the glade and into the woods, but shone heavenward with the insistence of a directed beam. Simultaneously, the very air seemed charged with evil; all around us lay thickly such an aura of fearsomeness that it rapidly became impossible to remain free of it. It was apparent that by some means unknown to us the rushing sound as of wind which now filled the air was not only associated with the broad beam of light flowing upward, *but was caused by it;* moreover, as we watched, the intensity and color of the light varied constantly, changing from a blinding white to a lambent green, from green to a kind of lavender; occasionally it was so intensely brilliant that it was necessary to avert our eyes, but for the most part it could be looked at without hurt to our eyes.

As suddenly as it had begun, the rushing sound stopped, the light be-

came diffuse and dim; and almost immediately the weird piping as of flutes smote upon our ears. It came not from around us, but from *above,* and with one accord, both of us turned to look as far into heaven as the now fading light would permit.

Just what took place then before our eyes I cannot explain. Was it actually something that came hurtling down, streaming down, rather?—for the masses were shapeless—or was it the product of imagination that proved singularly uniform when later Laird and I found opportunity to compare notes? The illusion of great black things streaking down in the path of that light was so great that we glanced back at the slab.

What we saw there sent us screaming voicelessly from that hellish spot.

For, where but a moment before there had been nothing, there was now a gigantic protoplasmic mass, a colossal being who towered upward toward the stars, and whose actual physical being was in constant flux; and flanking it on either side were two lesser beings, equally amorphous, holding pipes or flutes in appendages and making that demoniac music which echoed and reechoed in the enclosing forest. But the thing on the slab, the Dweller in Darkness, was the ultimate in horror; for from its mass of amorphous flesh there grew at will before our eyes tentacles, claws, hands, and withdrew again; the mass itself diminished and swelled effortlessly, and where its head was and its features should have been there was only a blank facelessness all the more horrible because even as we looked there rose from its blind mass a low ululation in that half-bestial, half-human voice so familiar to us from the record made in the night!

We fled, I say, so shaken that it was only by a supreme effort of will that we were able to take flight in the right direction. And behind us the voice rose, the blasphemous voice of Nyarlathotep, the Blind, Faceless One, the Mighty Messenger, even while there rang in the channels of memory the frightened words of the half-breed, Old Peter—*It was a Thing—didn't have no face, hollered there till I thought my eardrums 'd bust, and them things that was with it—Gawd!*—echoed there while the voice of that Being from outermost space shrieked and gibbered to the hellish music of the hideous attending flute-players, rising to ululate through the forest and leave its mark forever in memory!

Ygnaiih! Ygnaiih! EEE-yayayayayaaa-haaahaaahaaahaaa-ngh'aaa-ngh'aaa-ya-ya-yaaa!

Then all was still.

And yet, incredible as it may seem, the ultimate horror awaited us.

For we had gone but halfway to the lodge when we were simultaneously

aware of something following; behind us rose a hideous, horribly suggestive *sloshing* sound, as if the amorphous entity had left the slab which in some remote time must have been erected by its worshippers, and was pursuing us. Obsessed by abysmal fright, we ran as neither of us has ever run before, and we were almost upon the lodge before we were aware that the sloshing sound, the trembling and shuddering of the earth—as if some gigantic being walked upon it—had ceased, and in their stead came only the calm, unhurried tread of footsteps.

But the footsteps were not our own! And in the aura of unreality, the fearsome outsideness in which we walked and breathed, the suggestiveness of those footsteps was almost maddening!

We reached the lodge, lit a lamp, and sank into chairs to await whatever it was that was coming so steadily, unhurriedly on, mounting the verandah steps, putting its hand on the knob of the door, swinging the door open. . . .

It was Professor Gardner who stood there!

Then Laird sprang up, crying, "Professor Gardner!"

The professor smiled reservedly and put one hand up to shade his eyes. "If you don't mind, I'd like the light dimmed. I've been in the dark so long. . . ."

Laird turned to do his bidding without question, and he came forward into the room, walking with the ease and poise of a man who is as sure of himself as if he had never vanished from the face of the earth more than three months before, as if he had not made a frantic appeal to us during the night just past, as if. . . .

I glanced at Laird; his hand was still at the lamp, but his fingers were no longer turning down the wick, simply holding to it, while he gazed down unseeing. I looked over at Professor Gardner; he sat with his head turned from the lights, his eyes closed, a little smile playing about his lips; at that moment he looked precisely as I had often seen him look at the University Club in Madison, and it was as if everything that had taken place here at the lodge were but an evil dream.

But it was not a dream!

"You were gone last night?" asked the professor.

"Yes. But, of course, we had the dictaphone."

"Ah. You heard something then?"

"Would you like to hear the record, sir?"

"Yes, I would."

Laird went over and put it on the machine to play it again, and we sat in silence, listening to everything upon it, no one saying anything until it had been completed. Then the professor slowly turned his head.

"What do you make of it?"

"I don't know what to make of it, sir," answered Laird. "The speeches are too disjointed—except for yours. There seems to be some coherence there."

Suddenly, without warning, the room was surcharged with menace; it was but a momentary impression, but Laird felt it as keenly as I did, for he started noticeably. He was taking the record from the machine when the professor spoke again.

"It doesn't occur to you that you may be the victim of a hoax?"

"No."

"And if I told you that I had found it possible to make every sound that was registered on that record?"

Laird looked at him for a full minute before replying in a low voice that of course, Professor Gardner had been investigating the phenomena of Rick's Lake woods for a far longer time than we had, and if he said so. . . .

A harsh laugh escaped the professor. "Entirely natural phenomena, my boy! There's a mineral deposit under that grotesque slab in the woods; it gives off light and also a miasma that is productive of hallucinations. It's as simple as that. As for the various disappearances—sheer folly, human failing, nothing more, but with the air of coincidence. I came here with high hopes of verifying some of the nonsense to which old Partier lent himself long ago—but—" He smiled disdainfully, shook his head, and extended his hand. "Let me have the record, Laird."

Without question, Laird gave Professor Gardner the record. The older man took it and was bringing it up before his eyes when he jogged his elbow and, with a sharp cry of pain, dropped it. It broke into dozens of pieces on the floor of the lodge.

"Oh!" cried the professor. "I'm sorry." He turned his eyes on Laird. "But then—since I can duplicate it any time for you from what I've learned about the lore of this place, by way of Partier's mouthings—" He shrugged.

"It doesn't matter," said Laird quietly.

"Do you mean to say that everything on that record was just your imag-

ination, Professor?" I broke in. "Even that chant for the summoning of Cthugha?"

The older man's eyes turned on me; his smile was sardonic. "Cthugha? What do you suppose he or that is but the figment of someone's imagination? And the inference—my dear boy, use your head. You have before you the clear inference that Cthugha has his abode on Fomalhaut, which is twenty-seven light-years away, and that, if this chant is thrice repeated when Fomalhaut has risen Cthugha will appear to somehow render this place no longer habitable by man or outside entity. How do you suppose that could be accomplished?"

"Why, by something akin to thought-transference," replied Laird doggedly. "It's not unreasonable to suppose that if we were to direct thoughts toward Fomalhaut that something there might receive them—granting that there might be life there. Thought is instant. And that they in turn may be so highly developed that dematerialization and rematerialization might be as swift as thought."

"My boy—are you serious?" The older man's voice revealed his contempt.

"You asked."

"Well, then, as the hypothetical answer to a theoretical problem, I can overlook that."

"Frankly," I said again, disregarding a curious negative shaking of Laird's head, "I don't think that what we saw in the forest tonight was just hallucination—caused by a miasma rising out of the earth or otherwise."

The effect of this statement was extraordinary. Visibly, the professor made every effort to control himself; his reactions were precisely those of a savant challenged by a cretin in one of his classes. After a few moments he controlled himself and said only, "You've been there then. I suppose it's too late to make you believe otherwise. . . ."

"I've always been open to conviction, sir, and I lean to the scientific method," said Laird.

Professor Gardner put his hand over his eyes and said, "I'm tired. I noticed last night when I was here that you're in my old room, Laird—so I'll take the room next to you, opposite Jack's."

He went up the stairs as if nothing had happened between the last time he had occupied the lodge and this.

V

THE REST OF THE STORY—and the culmination of that apocalyptic night—are soon told.

I could not have been asleep for more than an hour—the time was one in the morning—when I was awakened by Laird. He stood beside my bed fully dressed and in a tense voice ordered me to get up and dress, to pack whatever essentials I had brought, and be ready for anything. Nor would he permit me to put on a light to do so, though he carried a small pocket-flash, and used it sparingly. To all my questions, he cautioned me to wait.

When I had finished, he led the way out of the room with a whispered, "Come."

He went directly to the room into which Professor Gardner had disappeared. By the light of his flash, it was evident that the bed had not been touched; moreover, in the faint film of dust that lay on the floor, it was clear that Professor Gardner had walked into the room, over to a chair beside the window, and out again.

"Never touched the bed, you see," whispered Laird.

"But why?"

Laird gripped my arm, hard. "Do you remember what Partier hinted—what we saw in the woods—the protoplasmic amorphousness of the thing? And what the record said?"

"But Gardner told us—" I protested.

Without a further word, he turned. I followed him downstairs, where he paused at the table where we had worked and flashed the light upon it. I was surprised into making a startled exclamation which Laird hushed instantly. For the table was bare of everything but the copy of *The Outsider and Others* and three copies of *Weird Tales,* a magazine containing stories supplementing those in the book by the eccentric Providence genius Lovecraft. All Gardner's notes, all our own notations, the photostats from Miskatonic University—everything gone!

"He took them," said Laird. "No one else could have done so."

"Where did he go?"

"Back to the place from which he came." He turned on me, his eyes gleaming in the reflected glow of the flashlight. "Do you understand what that means, Jack?"

I shook my head.

"*They* know we've been there, *they* know we've seen and learned too much. . . ."

"But how?"

"You told them."

"I? Good God, man, are you mad? How could I have told them?"

"Here, in this lodge, tonight—you yourself gave the show away, and I hate to think of what might happen now. We've got to get away."

For one moment all the events of the past few days seemed to fuse into an unintelligible mass; Laird's urgency was unmistakable, and yet the thing he suggested was so utterly unbelievable that its contemplation even for so fleeting a moment threw my thoughts into the extremest confusion.

Laird was talking now, quickly. "Don't you think it odd—how he came back? How he came out of the woods *after* the hellish thing we saw there—not before? And the questions he asked—the drift of those questions. And how he managed to break the record—our one scientific proof of something? And now, the disappearance of all the notes—of everything that might point to substantiation of what he called 'Partier's nonsense?'"

"But if we are to believe what he told us. . . ."

He broke in before I could finish. "One of them was right. Either the voice on the record calling to me—or the man who was here tonight."

"The man . . ."

But whatever I wanted to say was stilled by Laird's harsh, *"Listen!"*

From outside, from the depths of the horror-haunted dark, the earth-haven of the Dweller in Darkness, came once more, for the second time that night, the weirdly beautiful, yet cacophonous strains of flute-like music, rising and falling, accompanied by a kind of chanted ululation, and by the sound as of great wings flapping.

"Yes, I heard," I whispered.

"Listen closely!"

Even as he spoke, I understood. There was something more—the sounds from the forest were not only rising and falling—*they were approaching!*

"Now do you believe me?" demanded Laird. *"They're coming for us!"* He turned on me. "The chant!"

"What chant?" I fumbled stupidly.

"The Cthugha chant—do you remember it?"

"I took it down. I've got it here."

For an instant I was afraid that this, too, might have been taken from us, but it was not; it was in my pocket where I had left it. With shaking hands, Laird tore the paper from my grasp.

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthugha Fomalhaut n'gha-ghaa naf'l thagn! Iä! Cthugha!" he said, running to the verandah, myself at his heels.

Out of the woods came the bestial voice of the Dweller in the Dark. *"Ee-ya-ya-haa-haahaaa! Ygnaiih! Ygnaiih!"*

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthugha Fomalhaut n'gha-ghaa naf'l thagn! Iä! Cthugha!" repeated Laird for the second time.

Still the ghastly melee of sounds from the woods came on, in no way diminished, rising now to supreme heights of terror-fraught fury, with the bestial voice of The Thing from the slab added to the wild, mad music of the pipes, and the sound as of wings.

And then, once more, Laird repeated the primal words of the chant.

On the instant that the final guttural sound had left his lips, there began a sequence of events no human eye was ever destined to witness. For suddenly the darkness was gone, giving way to a fearsome amber glow; simultaneously the flute-like music ceased, and in its place rose cries of rage and terror. Then, there appeared thousands of tiny points of light—not only on and among the trees, but on the earth itself, on the lodge and the car standing before it. For still a further moment we were rooted to the spot, and then it was borne in upon us that the myriad points of light were *living entities of flame!* For wherever they touched, fire sprang up, seeing which, Laird rushed into the lodge for such of our things as he could carry forth before the holocaust made it impossible for us to escape Rick's Lake.

He came running out—our bags had been downstairs—gasping that it was too late to take the dictaphone or anything else, and together we dashed toward the car, shielding our eyes a little from the blinding light all around. But even though we had shielded our eyes, it was impossible not to see the great amorphous shapes streaming skyward from this accursed place, nor the equally great being hovering like a cloud of living fire above the trees. So much we saw, before the frightful struggle to escape the burning woods forced us to forget mercifully the other details of that terrible, maddened flight.

Horrible as were the things that took place in the darkness of the forest at Rick's Lake, there was something more cataclysmic still, something so blas-

phemously conclusive that even now I shudder and tremble uncontrollably to think of it. For in that brief dash to the car, I saw something that explained Laird's doubt, I saw what had made him take heed of the voice on the record and not of the thing that came to us as Professor Gardner. The keys were there before, but I did not understand; even Laird had not fully believed. Yet it was given to us—we did not know. "It is not desired by the Old Ones that mere man shall know too much," Partier had said. And that terrible voice on the record had hinted even more clearly: *Go forth in his form or in whatever form chosen in the guise of man, and destroy that which may lead them to us. . . .* Destroy that which may lead them to us! Our record, the notes, the photostats from Miskatonic University, yes, and even Laird and myself! And The Thing had gone forth, for it was Nyarlathotep, the Mighty Messenger, the Dweller in Darkness who had gone forth and who had returned into the forest to send his minions back to us. It was he who had come from interstellar space even as Cthugha, the fire being, had come from Fomalhaut upon the utterance of the command that woke him from his eon-long sleep under that amber star, the command that Gardner, the living-dead captive of the terrible Nyarlathotep, had discovered in those fantastic travellings in space and time; and it was he who returned whence he had come, with his earth-haven now forever rendered useless for him with its destruction by the minions of Cthugha!

I know, and Laird knows. We never speak of it.

If we had had any doubt, despite everything that had gone before, we could not forget that final, soul-searing discovery, the thing we saw when we shielded our eyes from the flames all around and looked away from those beings in the heavens, the line of footprints that led away from the lodge in the direction of that hellish slab deep in the black forest, *the footprints that began in the soft soil beyond the verandah in the shape of a man's footprints, and changed with each step into a hideously suggestive imprint made by a creature of incredible shape and weight, with variations of outline and size so grotesque as to have been incomprehensible to anyone who had not seen the thing on the slab—and beside them, torn and rent as if by an expanding force, the clothing that once belonged to Professor Gardner, left piece by piece along the trail back into the woods, the trail taken by the hellish monstrosity that had come out of the night, the Dweller in Darkness who had visited us in the shape and guise of Professor Gardner!*



I

THE STORY IS really my grandfather's.

In a manner of speaking, however, it belongs to the entire family, and beyond them, to the world; and there is no longer any reason for suppressing the singularly terrible details of what happened in that lonely house deep in the forest places of northern Wisconsin.

The roots of the story go back into the mists of early time, far beyond the beginnings of the Alwyn family line, but of this I knew nothing at the time of my visit to Wisconsin in response to my cousin's letter about our grandfather's strange decline in health. Josiah Alwyn had always seemed somehow immortal to me even as a child, and he had not appeared to change throughout the years between: a barrel-chested old man, with a heavy, full face, decorated with a closely clipped moustache and a small beard to soften the hard line of his square jaw. His eyes were dark, not over-large, and his brows were shaggy; he wore his hair long, so that his head had a leonine appearance. Though I saw little of him when I was very young, still he left an indelible impression on me in the brief visits he paid when he stopped at the ancestral country home near Arkham, in Massachusetts—those short calls

he made on his way to and from remote corners of the world: Tibet, Mongolia, the Arctic regions, and certain little-known islands in the Pacific.

I had not seen him for years when the letter came from my cousin Frolin, who lived with him in the old house grandfather owned in the heart of the forest and lake country of northern Wisconsin. "I wish you could uproot yourself from Massachusetts long enough to come out here. A great deal of water has passed under various bridges, and the wind has blown about many changes since last you were here. Frankly, I think it most urgent that you come. In present circumstances, I don't know to whom to turn, grandfather being not himself, and I need someone who can be trusted." There was nothing obviously urgent about the letter, and yet there was a queer constraint, there was something between the lines that stood out invisibly, intangibly, to make possible only one answer to Frolin's letter—something in his phrase about the wind, something in the way he had written *grandfather being not himself,* something in the need he had expressed for *someone who can be trusted.*

I could easily take leave of absence from my position as assistant librarian at Miskatonic University in Arkham and go west that September; so I went. I went, harassed by an almost uncanny conviction that the need for haste was great: from Boston by plane to Chicago, and from there by train to the village of Harmon, deep in the forest country of Wisconsin—a place of great natural beauty, not far from the shores of Lake Superior, so that it was possible on days of wind and weather to hear the water's sound.

Frolin met me at the station. My cousin was in his late thirties then, but he had the look of someone ten years younger, with hot, intense brown eyes, and a soft, sensitive mouth that belied his inner hardness. He was singularly sober, though he had always alternated between gravity and a kind of infectious wildness—"the Irish in him," as grandfather had once said. I met his eyes when I shook his hand, probing for some clue to his withheld distress, but I saw only that he was indeed troubled, for his eyes betrayed him, even as the roiled waters of a pond reveal disturbance below, though the surface may be as glass.

"What is it?" I asked, when I sat at his side in the coupe, riding into the country of the tall pines. "Is the old man abed?"

He shook his head. "Oh, no, nothing like that, Tony." He shot me a queer, restrained glance. "You'll see. You wait and see."

"What is it then?" I pressed him. "Your letter had the damnedest sound."

"I hoped it would," he said gravely.

"And yet there was nothing I could put my finger on," I admitted. "But it was there, nevertheless."

He smiled. "Yes, I knew you'd understand. I tell you, it's been difficult—extremely difficult. I thought of you a good many times before I sat down and wrote that letter, believe me!"

"But if he's not ill . . . ? I thought you said he wasn't himself."

"Yes, yes, so I did. You wait now, Tony; don't be so impatient; you'll see for yourself. It's his mind, I think."

"His mind!" I felt a distinct wave of regret and shock at the suggestion that grandfather's mind had given way; the thought that that magnificent brain had retreated from sanity was intolerable, and I was loath to entertain it. "Surely not!" I cried. "Frolin—what the devil is it?"

He turned his troubled eyes on me once more. "I don't know. But I think it's something terrible. If it were only grandfather. But there's the music—and then there are all the other things: the sounds and smells and—" He caught my amazed stare and turned away, almost with physical effort pausing in his talk. "But I'm forgetting. Don't ask me anything more. Just wait. You'll see for yourself." He laughed shortly, a forced laugh. "Perhaps it's not the old man who's losing his mind. I've thought of that sometimes, too—with reason."

I said nothing more, but there was beginning to mushroom up inside me now a kind of tense fear, and for some time I sat by his side, thinking only of Frolin and old Josiah Alwyn living together in that old house, unaware of the towering pines all around, and the wind's sound, and the fragrant pungence of leaf-fire smoke riding the wind out of the northwest. Evening came early to this country, caught in the dark pines, and, though afterglow still lingered in the west, fanning upward in a great wave of saffron and amethyst, darkness already possessed the forest through which we rode. Out of the darkness came the cries of the great horned owls and their lesser cousins, the screech owls, making an eerie magic in the stillness broken otherwise only by the wind's voice and the noise of the car passing along the comparatively little-used road to the Alwyn house.

"We're almost there," said Frolin.

The lights of the car passed over a jagged pine, lightning-struck years

ago, and standing still with two gaunt limbs arched like gnarled arms toward the road: an old landmark to which Frolin's words called my attention, since he knew I would remember it but half a mile from the house.

"If grandfather should ask," he said then, "I'd rather you said nothing about my sending for you. I don't know that he'd like it. You can tell him you were in the Midwest and came up for a visit."

I was curious anew, but forebore to press Frolin further. "He does know I'm coming, then?"

"Yes. I said I had word from you and was going down to meet your train."

I could understand that if the old man thought Frolin had sent for me about his health, he would be annoyed and perhaps angry; and yet more than this was implied in Frolin's request, more than just the simple salving of grandfather's pride. Once more that odd, intangible alarm rose up within me, that sudden, inexplicable feeling of fear.

The house looked forth suddenly in a clearing among the pines. It had been built by an uncle of grandfather's in Wisconsin's pioneering days, back in the 1850s: by one of the seafaring Alwyns of Innsmouth, that strange, dark town on the Massachusetts coast. It was an unusually unattractive structure, snug against the hillside like a crusty old woman in furbelows. It defied many architectural standards without, however, seeming ever fully free of most of the superficial facets of architecture circa 1850, making for the most grotesque and pompous appearance of structures of that day. It suffered a wide verandah, one side of which led directly into the stables where, in former days, horses, surreys, and buggies had been kept, and where now two cars were housed—the only corner of the building which gave any evidence at all of having been remodeled since it was built. The house rose two and one-half stories above a cellar floor; presumably, for darkness made it impossible to ascertain, it was still painted the same hideous brown; and judging by what light shone forth from the curtained windows, grandfather had not yet taken the trouble to install electricity, a contingency for which I had come well prepared by carrying a flashlight and an electric candle, with extra batteries for both.

Frolin drove into the garage, left the car, and carrying some of my baggage, led the way down the verandah to the front door, a massive, thick-paneled oak piece, decorated with a ridiculously large iron knocker. The hall

was dark, save for a partly open door at the far end, out of which came a faint light which was yet enough to illumine spectrally the broad stairs leading to the upper floor.

"I'll take you to your room first," said Frolin, leading the way up the stairs, surefooted with habitual walking there. "There's a flashlight on the newel post at the landing," he added. "If you need it. You know the old man."

I found the light and lit it, making only enough delay so that when I caught up with Frolin, he was standing at the door of my room, which, I noticed, was almost directly over the front entrance and thus faced west, as did the house itself.

"He's forbidden us to use any of the rooms east of the hall up here," said Frolin, fixing me with his eyes, as much as to say: You see how queer he's got! He waited for me to say something, but since I did not, he went on. "So I have the room next to yours, and Hough is on the other side of me, in the southwest corner. Right now, as you might have noticed, Hough's getting something to eat."

"And grandfather?"

"Very likely in his study. You'll remember that room."

I did indeed remember that curious windowless room, built under explicit directions by Great-Uncle Leander, a room that occupied the majority of the rear of the house, the entire northwest corner and all the west width save for a small corner at the southwest, where the kitchen was, the kitchen from which a light had streamed into the lower hall at our entrance. The study had been pushed partway back into the hill slope, so the east wall could not have windows, but there was no reason save Uncle Leander's eccentricity for the windowless north wall. Squarely in the center of the east wall, indeed, built into the wall, was an enormous painting, reaching from the floor to the ceiling and occupying a width of over six feet. If this painting, apparently executed by some unknown friend of Uncle Leander's, if not by my great-uncle himself, had had about it any mark of genius or even of unusual talent, this display might have been overlooked, but it did not, it was a perfectly prosaic representation of a north country scene, showing a hillside, with a rocky cave opening out into the center of the picture, a scarcely defined path leading to the cave, an impressionistic beast which was evidently meant to resemble a bear, once common in this country, walking

toward it, and overhead something that looked like an unhappy cloud lost among the pines rising darkly all around. This dubious work of art completely and absolutely dominated the study, despite the shelves of books that occupied almost every available niche in what remained of the walls in that room, despite the absurd collection of oddities strewn everywhere—bits of curiously carven stone and wood, strange mementos of great-uncle's seafaring life. The study had all the lifelessness of a museum, and yet, oddly, it responded to my grandfather like something alive, even the painting on the wall seeming to take on an added freshness whenever he entered.

"I don't think anyone who ever stepped into that room could forget it," I said with a grim smile.

"He spends most of his time there. Hardly goes out at all, and I suppose, with winter coming on, he'll come out only for his meals. He's moved his bed, too."

I shuddered. "I can't imagine sleeping in that room."

"No, nor I. But you know, he's working on something, and I sincerely believe his mind has been affected."

"Another book on his travels, perhaps?"

He shook his head. "No, a translation, I think. Something different. He found some old papers of Leander's one day, and ever since then he seems to have got progressively worse." He raised his eyebrows and shrugged. "Come on. Hough will have supper ready by this time, and you'll see for yourself."

Frolin's cryptic remarks had led me to expect an emaciated old man. After all, grandfather was in his early seventies, and even he could not be expected to live forever. But he had not changed physically at all, as far as I could see. There he sat at his supper table—still the same hardy old man, his moustache and beard not yet white, but only iron grey, and still with plenty of black in them; his face was no less heavy, his color no less ruddy. At the moment of my entrance he was eating heartily from the drumstick of a turkey. Seeing me, he raised his eyebrows a little, took the drumstick from his lips, and greeted me with no more excitement than if I had been away from him but half an hour.

"You're looking well," he said.

"And you," I said. "An old war-horse."

He grinned. "My boy, I'm on the trail of something new—some unexplored country apart from Africa, Asia, and the Arctic regions."

I flashed a glance at Frolin. Clearly, this was news to him; whatever hints grandfather might have dropped of his activities, they had not included this.

He asked then about my trip west, and the rest of the supper hour was taken up with small talk of other relatives. I observed that the old man returned insistently to long-forgotten relatives in Innsmouth: what had become of them? Had I ever seen them? What did they look like? Since I knew practically nothing of the relatives in Innsmouth, and had the firm conviction that all had died in a strange catastrophe which had washed many inhabitants of that shunned city out to sea, I was not helpful. But the tenor of these innocuous questions puzzled me no little. In my capacity as librarian at Miskatonic University, I had heard strange and disturbing hints of the business in Innsmouth. I knew something of the appearance of Federal Men there, and stories of foreign agents had never had about them that essential ring of truth which made a plausible explanation for the terrible events which had taken place in that city. He wanted to know at last whether I had ever seen pictures of them, and when I said I had not, he was quite patently disappointed.

"Do you know," he said dejectedly, "there does not exist even a likeness of Uncle Leander, but the oldtimers around Harmon told me years ago that he was a very homely man, that he reminded them of a *frog*." Abruptly, he seemed more animated, he began to talk a little faster. "Do you have any conception of what that means, my boy? But no, you wouldn't have. It's too much to expect. . . ."

He sat for a while in silence, drinking his coffee, drumming on the table with his fingers and staring into space with a curiously preoccupied air until suddenly he rose and left the room, inviting us to come to the study when we had finished.

"What do you make of that?" asked Frolin, when the sound of the study door closing came to us.

"Curious," I said. "But I see nothing abnormal there, Frolin. I'm afraid. . . ."

He smiled grimly. "Wait. Don't judge yet; you've been here scarcely two hours."

We went to the study after supper, leaving the dishes to Hough and his wife, who had served my grandfather for twenty years in this house. The study was unchanged, save for the addition of the old double bed, pushed up against the wall which separated the room from the kitchen. Grandfather was clearly waiting for us, or rather for me, and, if I had had occasion to think cousin Frolin cryptic, there is no word adequate to describe my grandfather's subsequent conversation.

"Have you ever heard of the Wendigo?" he asked.

I admitted that I had come upon it among other north country Indian legends: the belief in a monstrous supernatural being, horrible to look upon, the haunter of the great forest silences.

He wanted to know whether I had ever thought of there being a possible connection between this legend of the Wendigo and the air elements, and upon my replying in the affirmative, he expressed a curiosity about how I had come to know the Indian legend in the first place, taking pains to explain that the Wendigo had nothing whatever to do with his question.

"In my capacity as a librarian, I have occasion to run across a good many out-of-the-way things," I answered.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, reaching for a book next his chair. "Then doubtless you may be familiar with this volume."

I looked at the heavy black-bound volume whose title was stamped only on its backbone in goldleaf. *The Outsider and Others,* by H. P. Lovecraft.

I nodded. "This book is on our shelves."

"You've read it, then?"

"Oh, yes. Most interesting."

"Then you'll have read what he has to say about Innsmouth in his strange story, 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth.' What do you make of that?"

I reflected hurriedly, thinking back to the story, and presently it came to me: a fantastic tale of horrible sea-beings, spawn of Cthulhu, beast of primordial origin, living deep in the sea.

"The man had a good imagination," I said.

"Had! Is he dead, then?"

"Yes, three years ago."

"Alas! I had thought to learn from him. . . ."

"But, surely, this fiction . . ." I began.

He stopped me. "Since you have offered no explanation of what took place in Innsmouth, how can you be so sure that his narrative is fiction?"

I admitted that I could not, but it seemed that the old man had already lost interest. Now he drew forth a bulky envelope bearing many of the familiar three-cent 1869 stamps so dear to collectors, and from this took out various papers, which, he said, Uncle Leander had left with instructions for their consignment to the flames. His wish, however, had not been carried out, explained grandfather, and he had come into possession of them. He handed a few sheets to me, and requested my opinion of them, watching me shrewdly all the while.

The sheets were obviously from a long letter, written in a crabbed hand, and with some of the most awkward sentences imaginable. Moreover, many of the sentences did not seem to me to make sense, and the sheet at which I looked longest was filled with allusions strange to me. My eyes caught words like *Ithaqua, Lloigor, Hastur;* it was not until I handed the sheets back to my grandfather that it occurred to me that I had seen those words elsewhere, not too long ago. But I said nothing. I explained that I could not help feeling that Uncle Leander wrote with needless obfuscation.

Grandfather chuckled. "I should have thought that the first thing which would have occurred to you would have been similar to my own reaction, but no, you failed me! Surely it's obvious that the whole business is a code!"

"Of course! That would explain the awkwardness of his lines."

My grandfather smirked. "A fairly simple code, but adequate—entirely adequate. I have not yet finished with it." He tapped the envelope with one index finger. "It seems to concern this house, and there is in it a repeated warning that one must be careful, and not pass beyond the threshold, for fear of dire consequences. My boy, I've crossed and recrossed every threshold in this house scores of times, and there have been no consequences. So therefore, somewhere there must exist a threshold I have not yet crossed."

I could not help smiling at his animation. "If Uncle Leander's mind was wandering, you've been off on a pretty chase," I said.

Abruptly grandfather's well-known impatience boiled to the surface. With one hand he swept my uncle's papers away; with the other he dismissed us both, and it was plain to see that Frolin and I had on the instant ceased to exist for him.

We rose, made our excuses, and left the room.

In the half-dark of the hall beyond, Frolin looked at me, saying nothing, only permitting his hot eyes to dwell upon mine for a long minute before he turned and led the way upstairs, where we parted, each to go to his own room for the night.

II

THE NOCTURNAL ACTIVITY of the subconscious mind has always been of deep interest to me, since it has seemed to me that unlimited opportunities are opened up before every alert individual. I have repeatedly gone to bed with some problem vexing me, only to find it solved, insofar as I am capable of solving it, upon waking. Of those other, more devious activities of the night mind, I have less knowledge. I know that I retired that night with the question of where I had encountered my Uncle Leander's strange words before strong and foremost in mind, and I know that I went to sleep at last with that question unanswered.

Yet, when I awoke in the darkness some hours later, I knew at once that I have seen those words, those strange proper names in the book by H. P. Lovecraft which I had read at Miskatonic, and it was only secondarily that I was aware of someone tapping at my door, and called out in a hushed voice.

"It's Frolin. Are you awake? I'm coming in."

I got up, slipped on my dressing gown, and lit my electric candle. By this time Frolin was in the room, his thin body trembling a little, possibly from the cold, for the September night air flowing through my window was no longer of summer.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

He came over to me, a strange light in his eyes, and put a hand on my arm. "Can't you hear it?" he asked. "God, perhaps it *is* my mind. . . ."

"No, wait!" I exclaimed.

From somewhere outside, it seemed, came the sound of weirdly beautiful music: flutes, I thought.

"Grandfather's at the radio," I said. "Does he often listen so late?"

The expression on his face halted my words. "I own the only radio in the house. It's in my room, and it's not playing. The battery's run down, in any case. Besides, did you ever hear *such* music on the radio?"

I listened with renewed interest. The music seemed strangely muffled, and yet it came through. I observed also that it had no definite direction; while before it had seemed to come from outside, it now seemed to come from underneath the house—a curious, chant-like playing of reeds and pipes.

"A flute orchestra," I said.

"Or Pan pipes," said Frolin.

"They don't play them anymore," I said absently.

"Not on the radio," answered Frolin.

I looked up at him sharply; he returned my gaze as steadily. It occurred to me that his unnatural gravity had a reason for being, whether or not he wished to put that reason into words. I caught hold of his arms.

"Frolin—what is it? I can tell you're alarmed."

He swallowed hard. "Tony, that music doesn't come from anything in the house. It's from outside."

"But who would be outside?" I demanded.

"Nothing—no one human."

It had come at last. Almost with relief I faced this issue I had been afraid to admit to myself must be faced. *Nothing—no one human.*

"Then—what agency?" I asked.

"I think grandfather knows," he said. "Come with me, Tony. Leave the light; we can make our way in the dark."

Out in the hall, I was stopped once more by his hand tense on my arm. "Do you notice?" he whispered sibilantly. "Do you notice this, too?"

"The smell," I said. The vague, elusive smell of water, of fish and frogs and the inhabitants of watery places.

"And now!" he said.

Quite suddenly the smell of water was gone, and instead came a swift frostiness, flowing through the hall as of something alive, the indefinable fragrance of snow, the crisp moistness of snowy air.

"Do you wonder I've been concerned?" asked Frolin.

Giving me no time to reply, he led the way downstairs to the door of grandfather's study, beneath which there shone yet a fine line of yellow light. I was conscious in every step of our descent to the floor below that the music was growing louder, if no more understandable, and now, before the study door, it was apparent that the music emanated from within, and that

the strange variety of odors came, too, from that study. The darkness seemed alive with menace, charged with an impending, ominous terror, which enclosed us as in a shell, so that Frolin trembled at my side.

Impulsively I raised my arm and knocked on the door.

There was no answer from within, but on the instant of my knock, the music stopped, the strange odors vanished from the air!

"You shouldn't have done that!" whispered Frolin. "If he . . ."

I tried the door. It yielded to my pressure, and I opened it.

I do not know what I expected to see there in the study, but certainly not what I did see. No single aspect of the room had changed, save that grandfather had gone to bed, and now sat there with his eyes closed and a little smile on his lips, some of his work open before him on the bed, and the lamp burning. I stood for an instant staring, not daring to believe my eyes, incredible before the prosaic scene I looked upon. Whence then had come the music I had heard? And the odors and fragrances in the air? Confusion took possession of my thoughts, and I was about to withdraw, disturbed by the repose of my grandfather's features, when he spoke.

"Come in, then," he said, without opening his eyes. "So you heard the music, too? I had begun to wonder why no one else heard it. Mongolian, I think. Three nights ago, it was clearly Indian—north country again, Canada and Alaska. I believe there are places where Ithaqua is still worshipped. Yes, yes—and a week ago, notes I last heard played in Tibet, in forbidden Lhassa years ago, decades ago."

"Who made it?" I cried. "Where did it come from?"

He opened his eyes and regarded us standing there. "It came from here, I think," he said, placing the flat of one hand on the manuscript before him, the sheets written by my great-uncle. "And Leander's friends made it. Music of the spheres, my boy—do you credit your senses?"

"I heard it. So did Frolin."

"And what can Hough be thinking?" mused grandfather. He sighed. "I have nearly got it, I think. It only remains to determine with which of them Leander communicated."

"Which?" I repeated. "What do you mean?"

He closed his eyes and the smile came briefly back to his lips. "I thought at first it was Cthulhu; Leander was, after all, a seafaring man. But now—I wonder if it might not be one of the creatures of the air: Lloigor, per-

haps—or Ithaqua, whom I believe certain of the Indians call the Wendigo. There is a legend that Ithaqua carries his victims with him in the far spaces above the earth—but I am forgetting myself again, my mind wanders." His eyes flashed open, and I found him regarding us with a peculiarly aloof stare. "It's late," he said. "I need sleep."

"What in God's name was he talking about?" asked Frolin in the hall.

"Come along," I said.

But, back in my room once more, with Frolin waiting expectantly to hear what I had to say, I did not know how to begin. How would I tell him about the weird knowledge hidden in the forbidden texts at Miskatonic University—the dread *Book of Eibon,* the obscure Pnakotic Manuscripts, the terrible *R'lyeh Text,* and, most shunned of all, the *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred? How could I say to him with any conviction at all the things that crowded into my mind as a result of hearing my grandfather's strange words, the memories that boiled up from deep within—of powerful Ancient Ones, elder beings of unbelievable evil, old gods who once inhabited the earth and all the universe as we know it now, and perhaps far more—old gods of ancient good, and forces of ancient evil, of whom the latter were now in leash, and yet ever breaking forth, becoming manifest briefly, horribly, to the world of men? And their terrible names came back now, if before this hour my clue to remembrance had not been made strong enough, had been refused in the fastnesses of my inherent prejudices—Cthulhu, potent leader of the forces of the waters of earth; Yog-Sothoth and Tsathoggua, dwellers in the depths of earth; Lloigor, Hastur, and Ithaqua, the Snow-Thing, and Wind-Walker, who were the elementals of air. It was of these beings that grandfather had spoken; and the inference he had made was too plain to be disregarded, or even to be subject to any other interpretations—that my Great-Uncle Leander, whose home, after all, had once been in the shunned and now deserted city of Innsmouth, had had traffic with at least one of these beings. And there was a further inference that he had not made, but only hinted at in something he had said earlier in the evening—that there was somewhere in the house—a threshold, beyond which a man dared not walk, and what danger could lurk beyond that threshold but the path back into time, the way back to that hideous communication with the elder beings my Uncle Leander had had!

And yet somehow, the full import of grandfather's words had not

dawned upon me. Though he had said so much, there was far more he had left unsaid, and I could not blame myself later for not fully realizing that grandfather's activities were clearly bent toward discovering that hidden threshold of which Uncle Leander had so cryptically written—*and crossing it!* In the confusion of thought to which I had now come in my preoccupation with the ancient mythology of Cthulhu, Ithaqua, and the Elder Gods, I did not follow the obvious indications to that logical conclusion, possibly because I feared instinctively to go so far.

I turned to Frolin and explained to him as clearly as I could. He listened attentively, asking a few pointed questions from time to time, and, though he paled slightly at certain details I could not refrain from mentioning, he did not seem to be as incredulous as I might have thought. This in itself was evidence of the fact that there was still more to be discovered about my grandfather's activities and the occurrences in the house, though I did not immediately realize this. However, I was shortly to discover more of the underlying reason for Frolin's ready acceptance of my necessarily sketchy outline.

In the middle of a question, he ceased talking abruptly, and there came into his eyes an expression indicating that his attention had passed from me, from the room to somewhere beyond; he sat in an attitude of listening, and, impelled by his own actions, I, too, strained to hear what he heard.

Only the wind's voice in the trees, rising now a little, I thought. A storm coming.

"Do you hear it?" he said in a shaky whisper.

"No," I said quietly. "Only the wind."

"Yes, yes—the wind. I wrote you, remember. Listen."

"Now, come, Frolin, take hold of yourself. It's only the wind."

He gave me a pitying glance and, going to the window, beckoned me after him. I followed, coming to his side. Without a word he pointed into the darkness pressing close to the house. It took me a moment to accustom myself to the night, but presently I was able to see the line of trees struck sharply against the star-swept heavens. And then, instantly, I understood.

Though the sound of the wind roared and thundered about the house, nothing whatever disturbed the trees before my eyes—not a leaf, not a treetop, not a twig, swayed by so much as a hair's breadth!

"Good God!" I exclaimed, and fell back, away from the pane, as if to shut the sight from my eyes.

"Now, you see," he said, stepping back from the window, also. "I have heard all this before."

He stood quietly, as if waiting, and I, too, waited. The sound of the wind continued unabated; it had by this time reached a frightful intensity, so that it seemed as if the old house must be torn from the hillside and hurtled into the valley below. Indeed, a faint trembling made itself manifest even as I thought this: a strange tremor, as if the house were *shuddering,* and the pictures on the walls made a slight, almost *stealthy* movement, almost imperceptible, and yet quite unmistakably visible. I glanced at Frolin, but his features were not disquieted; he continued to stand, listening and waiting, so that it was patent that the end of this singular manifestation was not yet. The wind's sound was now a terrible, demoniac howling, and it was accompanied by notes of music, which must have been audible for some time, but were so perfectly blended with the wind's voice that I was not at first aware of them. The music was similar to that which had gone before, as of pipes and occasionally stringed instruments, but was now much wilder, sounding with a terrifying abandon, with a character of unmentionable evil about it. At the same time, two further manifestations occurred. The first was the sound as of someone walking, some great being whose footsteps seemed to flow into the room from the heart of the wind itself; certainly they did not originate in the house, though there was about them the unmistakable swelling which betokened their approach to the house. The second was the sudden change in the temperature.

The night outside was warm for September in upstate Wisconsin, and the house, too, had been reasonably comfortable. Now, abruptly, coincident with the approaching footsteps, the temperature began to drop rapidly, so that in a little while the air in the room was cold, and both Frolin and I had to put on more clothing in order to keep comfortable. Still this did not seem to be the height of the manifestations for which Frolin so obviously waited; he continued to stand, saying nothing, though his eyes, meeting mine from time to time, were eloquent enough to speak his mind. How long we stood there, listening to those frightening sounds from outside, before the end came, I do not know.

But suddenly Frolin caught my arm and, in a hoarse whisper, cried, "There! There they are! Listen!"

The tempo of the weird music had changed abruptly to a diminuendo from its previous wild crescendo; there came into it now a strain of almost unbearable sweetness, with a little of melancholy to it, music as lovely as previously it had been evil, and yet the note of terror was not completely absent. At the same time, there was apparent the sound of voices, raised in a kind of swelling chant, rising from the back of the house somewhere—as if from the study.

"Great God in Heaven!" I cried, seizing Frolin. "What is it now?"

"It's grandfather's doing," he said. "Whether he knows it or not, that thing comes and sings to him." He shook his head and closed his eyes tightly for an instant before saying bitterly in a low, intense voice, "If only that accursed paper of Leander's had been burned as it ought to have been!"

"You could almost make out the words," I said, listening intently.

There *were* words—but not words I had ever heard before: a kind of horrible, primeval mouthing, as if some bestial creature with but half a tongue ululated syllables of meaningless horror. I went over and opened the door; immediately the sounds seemed clearer, so that it was evident that what I had mistaken for many voices was but one, which could nevertheless convey the illusion of many. Words—or perhaps I had better write *sounds,* bestial sounds—rose from below, a kind of awe-inspiring ululation:

"Iä! Iä! Ithaqua! Ithaqua cf'ayak vulgtmm. Iä! Uhg! Cthulhu fhtagn! Shub-Niggurath! Ithaqua naflfhtagn!"

Incredibly, the wind's voice rose to howl ever more terribly, so that I thought at any moment the house would be hurled into the void, and Frolin and myself torn from its rooms, and the breath sucked from our helpless bodies. In the confusion of fear and wonder that held me, I thought at that instant of grandfather in the study below, and beckoning Frolin, I ran from the room to the stairs, determined, despite my ghastly fright, to put myself between the old man and whatever menaced him. I ran to his door and flung myself upon it—and once more, as before, all manifestations stopped: as if by the flick of a switch, silence fell like a pall of darkness upon the house, a silence that was momentarily even more terrible.

The door gave, and once more I faced grandfather.

He was sitting still as we had left him but a short time before, though

now his eyes were open, his head was cocked a little to one side, and his gaze was fixed upon the overlarge painting on the east wall.

"In God's name!" I cried. "What was that?"

"I hope to find out before long," he answered with great dignity and gravity.

His utter lack of fear quieted my own alarm to some degree, and I came a little farther into the room, Frolin following. I leaned over his bed, striving to fix his attention upon me, but he continued to gaze at the painting with singular intensity.

"What are you doing?" I demanded. "Whatever it is, there's danger in it."

"An explorer like your grandfather would hardly be content if there were not, my boy," he replied crisply, matter-of-factly.

I knew it was true.

"I would rather die with my boots on than here in this bed," he went on. "As for what we heard—I don't know how much of it *you* heard—that's something for the moment not yet explicable. But I would call to your attention the strange action of the wind."

"There was no wind," I said. "I looked."

"Yes, yes," he said a little impatiently. "True enough. And yet the wind's sound was there, and all the voices of the wind—just as I have heard it singing in Mongolia, in the great snowy spaces, over the shunned and hidden Plateau of Leng where the Tcho-Tcho people worship strange ancient gods." He turned to face me suddenly, and I thought his eyes feverish. "I did tell you, didn't I, about the worship of Ithaqua, sometimes called Wind-Walker, and by some, surely, the Wendigo, by certain Indians in upper Manitoba, and of their beliefs that the Wind-Walker takes human sacrifices and carries them over the far places of the earth before leaving them behind, dead at last? Oh, there are stories, my boy, odd legends—and something more." He leaned toward me now with a fierce intensity. "I have myself seen things—things found on a body dropped from the air—just that—things that could not possibly have been got in Manitoba, things belonging to Leng, to the Pacific Isles." He brushed me away with one arm, and an expression of disgust crossed his face. "You don't believe me. You think I'm wandering. Go on then, go back to your little sleep, and wait for your last through the eternal misery of monotonous day after day!"

"No! Say it now. I'm in no mood to go."

"I will talk to you in the morning," he said tiredly, leaning back.

With that I had to be content; he was adamant, and could not be moved. I bade him good-night once more and retreated into the hall with Frolin, who stood there shaking his head slowly, forbiddingly.

"Every time a little worse," he whispered. "Every time the wind blows a little louder, the cold comes more intensely, the voices and the music more clearly—and the sound of those terrible footsteps!"

He turned away and began to retrace the way upstairs, and, after a moment of hesitation, I followed.

In the morning my grandfather looked his usual picture of good health. At the moment of my entrance into the dining room, he was speaking to Hough, evidently in answer to a request, for the old servant stood respectfully bowed, while he heard grandfather tell him that he and Mrs. Hough might indeed take a week off, beginning today, if it was necessary for Mrs. Hough's health that she go to Wausau to consult a specialist. Frolin met my eyes with a grim smile; his color had faded a little, leaving him pale and sleepless-looking, but he ate heartily enough. His smile, and the brief indicative glance of his eyes toward Hough's retreating back, said clearly that this necessity which had come upon Hough and his wife was their way of fighting the manifestations which had so disturbed my own first night in the house.

"Well, my boy," said grandfather quite cheerfully, "you're not looking nearly as haggard as you did last night. I confess, I felt for you. I daresay also you aren't nearly so skeptical as you were."

He chuckled, as if this were a subject for joking. I could not, unfortunately, feel the same way about it. I sat down and began to eat a little, glancing at him from time to time, waiting for him to begin his explanation of the strange events of the previous night. Since it became evident shortly that he did not intend to explain, I was impelled to ask for an explanation, and did so with as much dignity as possible.

"I'm sorry if you've been disturbed," he said. "The fact of the matter is that that threshold of which Leander wrote must be in that study somewhere, and I felt quite certain I was onto it last night, before you burst into my room the second time. Furthermore, it seems undisputable that at least one member of the family has had traffic with one of those beings—Leander, obviously."

Frolin leaned forward. "Do you believe in them?"

Grandfather smiled unpleasantly. "It must be obvious that, whatever my abilities, the disturbance you heard last night could hardly have been caused by me."

"Yes, of course," agreed Frolin. "But some other agency . . ."

"No, no—it remains to be determined only which one. The water smells are the sign of the spawn of Cthulhu, but the winds might be Lloigor or Ithaqua or Hastur. But the stars aren't right for Hastur," he went on. "So we are left with the other two. There they are, then, or one of them, just across that threshold. I want to know what lies beyond that threshold, if I can find it."

It seemed incredible that my grandfather should be talking so unconcernedly about these ancient beings; his prosaic air was in itself almost as alarming as had been the night's occurrences. The temporary feeling of security I had had at the sight of him eating breakfast was washed away; I began to be conscious again of that slowly growing fear I had known on my way to the house last evening, and I regretted having pushed my inquiry.

If my grandfather were aware of anything of this, he made no sign. He went on talking much in the manner of a lecturer pursuing a scientific inquiry for the benefit of an audience before him. It was obvious, he said, that a connection existed between the happenings at Innsmouth and Leander Alwyn's non-human contact *outside.* Did Leander leave Innsmouth originally because of the cult of Cthulhu that existed there, because he, too, was becoming afflicted with that curious facial change which overtook so many of the inhabitants of accursed Innsmouth?—those strange batrachian lineaments which horrified the Federal investigators who came to examine into the Innsmouth affair? Perhaps this was so. In any event, leaving the Cthulhu cult behind, he had made his way into the wilds of Wisconsin and somehow he had established contact with another of the elder beings, Lloigor or Ithaqua—all, to be noted, elemental forces of evil. Leander Alwyn was apparently a wicked man.

"If there is any truth to this," I cried, "then surely Leander's warning ought to be observed. Give up this mad hope of finding the threshold of which he writes!"

Grandfather gazed at me for a moment with speculative mildness; but it was plain to see that he was not actually concerning himself with my out-

burst. "Now I've embarked upon this exploration, I mean to keep to it. After all, Leander died a natural death."

"But, following your own theory, he had traffic with these—these things," I said. "You have none. You're daring to venture out into unknown space—it comes to that—without regard for what horrors might lie there."

"When I went to Mongolia, I encountered horrors, too. I never thought to escape Leng with my life." He paused reflectively, and then rose slowly. "No, I mean to discover Leander's threshold. And tonight, no matter what you hear, try not to interrupt me. It would be a pity, if after so long a time, I am still further delayed by your impetuosity."

"And having discovered the threshold," I cried. "What then?"

"I'm not sure I'll want to cross it."

"The choice may not be yours."

He looked at me for a moment in silence, smiled gently, and left the room.

III

OF THE EVENTS OF THAT catastrophic night, I find it difficult even at this late date to write, so vividly do they return to mind, despite the prosaic surroundings of Miskatonic University where so many of those dread secrets are hidden in ancient and little-known texts. And yet, to understand the widespread occurrences that came after, the events of that night must be known.

Frolin and I spent most of the day investigating my grandfather's books and papers, in search of verification of certain legends he had hinted at in his conversation, not only with me, but with Frolin even before my arrival. Throughout his work occurred many cryptic allusions, but only one narrative at all relative to our inquiry—a somewhat obscure story, clearly of legendary origin, concerning the disappearance of two residents of Nelson, a Manitoba and a constable of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, and their subsequent reappearance, as if dropped from the heavens, frozen and either dead or dying, babbling of *Ithaqua,* of the *Wind-Walker,* and of many places on the face of the earth, and carrying with them strange objects, mementos of far places, which they had never been known to carry in life. The story was incredible, and yet it was related to the mythology so clearly put

down in *The Outsider and Others,* and even more horribly narrated in the Pnakotic Manuscripts, the *R'lyeh Text,* and the terrible *Necronomicon.*

Apart from this, we found nothing tangible enough to relate to our problem, and we resigned ourselves to waiting for the night.

At luncheon and dinner, prepared by Frolin in the absence of the Houghs, my grandfather carried on as normally as he was accustomed to, making no reference to his strange exploration, beyond saying that he now had definite proof that Leander had painted that unattractive landscape on the east wall of the study, and that he hoped soon, as he neared the end of the deciphering of Leander's long, rambling letter, to find the essential clue to that threshold of which he wrote, and to which he now alluded increasingly. When he rose from the dinner table, he solemnly cautioned us once more not to interrupt him in the night, under pain of his extreme displeasure, and so departed into that study out of which he never walked again.

"Do you think you can sleep?" Frolin asked me, when we were alone.

I shook my head. "Impossible. I'll stay up."

"I don't think he'd like us to stay downstairs," said Frolin, a faint frown on his forehead.

"In my room, then," I replied. "And you?"

"With you, if you don't mind. He means to see it through, and there's nothing we can do until he needs us. He may call. . . ."

I had the uncomfortable conviction that if my grandfather called for us, it would be too late, but I forebore to give voice to my fears.

The events of that evening started as before—with the strains of that weirdly beautiful music welling flute-like from the darkness around the house. Then, in a little while, came the wind, and the cold, and the ululating voice. And then, preceded by an aura of evil so great that it was almost stifling in the room—then came something more, something unspeakably terrible. We had been sitting, Frolin and I, with the light out; I had not bothered to light my electric candle, since no light we could show would illumine the source of these manifestations. I faced the window and, when the wind began to rise, looked once again to the line of trees, thinking that surely, certainly, they must bend before this great onrushing storm of wind; but again there was nothing, no movement in that stillness. And there was no cloud in the heavens; the stars shone brightly, the constellations of summer moving down to the western rim of earth to make the signature of autumn

in the sky. The wind's sound had risen steadily, so that now it had the fury of a gale, and yet nothing, no movement, disturbed the line of trees dark upon the night sky.

But suddenly—so suddenly that for a moment I blinked my eyes in an effort to convince myself that a dream had shuttered my sight—in one large area of the sky the stars were gone! I came to my feet and pressed my face to the pane. It was as if a cloud had abruptly reared up into the heavens, to a height almost at the zenith; but no cloud could have come upon the sky so swiftly. On both sides and overhead stars still shone. I opened the window and leaned out, trying to follow the dark outline against the stars. *It was the outline of some great beast, a horrible caricature of man, rising to a semblance of a head high in the heavens, and there, where its eyes might have been, glowed with a deep carmine fire two stars!*—Or were they stars? At the same instant, the sound of those approaching footsteps grew so loud that the house shook and trembled with their vibrations, and the wind's demoniac fury rose to indescribable heights, and the ululation reached such a pitch that it was maddening to hear.

"Frolin!" I called hoarsely.

I heard him come to my side, and in a moment felt his tight grasp on my arm. So he, too, had seen; it was not hallucination, not dream—this giant thing outlined against the stars, and moving!

"It's moving," whispered Frolin. "Oh, God!—it's coming!"

He pulled frantically away from the window, and so did I. But in an instant, the shadow on the sky was gone, the stars shone once more. The wind, however, had not decreased in intensity one iota; indeed, if it were possible, it grew momentarily wilder and more violent; the entire house shuddered and quaked, while those thunderous footsteps echoed and re-echoed in the valley before the house. And the cold grew worse, so that breath hung a white vapor in air—a cold as of outer space.

Out of all the turmoil of mind, I thought of the legend in my grandfather's papers—the legend of *Ithaqua,* whose signature lay in the cold and snow of far northern places. Even as I remembered, everything was driven from my mind by a frightful chorus of ululation, the triumphant chanting as of a thousand bestial mouths—

"Iä! Iä! Ithaqua, Ithaqua! Ai! Ai! Ai! Ithaqua cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm. Ithaqua fhtagn! Ugh! Iä! Iä! Ai! Ai! Ai!"

Simultaneously came a thunderous crash, and immediately after, the

voice of my grandfather, raised in a terrible cry, a cry that rose into a scream of mortal terror, so that the names he would have uttered—Frolin's and mine—were lost, choked back into his throat by the full force of the horror revealed to him.

And, as abruptly as his voice ceased to sound, all other manifestations came to a stop, leaving again that ghastly, portentous silence to close around us like a cloud of doom.

Frolin reached the door of my room before I did, but I was not far behind. He fell part of the way down the stairs, but recovered in the light of my electric candle, which I had seized on my way out, and together we assaulted the door of the study, calling to the old man inside.

But no voice answered, though the line of yellow under the door was evidence that his lamp burned still.

The door had been locked from the inside, so that it was necessary to break it down before we could enter.

Of my grandfather, there was no trace. But in the east wall yawned a great cavity, where the painting, now prone upon the floor, had been—a rocky opening leading into the depths of earth—and over everything in the room lay the mark of Ithaqua—a fine carpet of snow, whose crystals gleamed as from a million tiny jewels in the yellow light of grandfather's lamp. Save for the painting, only the bed was disturbed—*as if grandfather had been literally torn out of it by stupendous force!*

I looked hurriedly to where the old man had kept Uncle Leander's manuscript—but it was gone; nothing of it remained. Frolin cried out suddenly and pointed to the painting Uncle Leander had made, and then to the opening yawning before us.

"It was here all the time—the threshold," he said.

And I saw even as he; as grandfather had seen too late—*for the painting by Uncle Leander was but the representation of the site of his home before the house had been erected to conceal that cavernous opening into the earth on the hillside, the hidden threshold against which Leander's manuscript had warned, the threshold beyond which my grandfather had vanished!*

Though there is little more to tell, yet the most damning of all the curious facts remain to be revealed. A thorough search of the cavern was subsequently made by county officials and certain intrepid adventurers from Harmon; it was found to have several openings, and it was plain that anyone

or *anything* wishing to reach the house through the cavern would have had to enter through one of the innumerable hidden crevices discovered among the surrounding hills. The nature of Uncle Leander's activities was revealed after grandfather's disappearance. Frolin and I were put through a hard grilling by suspicious county officials, but were finally released when the body of my grandfather did not come to light.

But since that night, certain facts came into the open, facts which, in the light of my grandfather's hints, coupled with the horrible legends contained in the shunned books locked away here in the library of Miskatonic University, are damning and damnably inescapable.

The first of them was the series of gigantic footprints found in the earth at the place where on that fatal night the shadow had risen into the star-swept heavens—the unbelievably wide and deep depressions, as of some prehistoric monster walking there, steps a half mile apart, steps that led beyond the house and vanished at a crevice leading down into that hidden cavern in tracks identical with those found in the snow in northern Manitoba where those unfortunate travellers and the constable sent to find them had vanished from the face of the earth!

The second was the discovery of my grandfather's notebook, together with a portion of Uncle Leander's manuscript, encased in ice, found deep in the forest snows of upper Saskatchewan, and bearing every sign of having been dropped from a great height. The last entry was dated on the day of his disappearance in late September; the notebook was not found until the following April. Neither Frolin nor I dared to make the explanation of its strange appearance which came immediately to mind, and together we burned that horrible letter and the imperfect translation grandfather had made, the translation which in itself, as it was written down, with all its warnings against the terror beyond the threshold, had served to summon from *outside* a creature so horrible that its description has never been attempted by even those ancient writers whose terrible narratives are scattered over the face of the earth!

And last of all, the most conclusive, the most damning evidence—the discovery seven months later of my grandfather's body on a small Pacific island not far southeast of Singapore, and the curious report made of his condition: perfectly preserved, *as if in ice,* so cold that no one could touch him with bare hands for five days after his discovery, and the singular fact

that he was found half buried in sand, *as if "he had fallen from an aeroplane!"* Neither Frolin nor I could any longer have any doubt; this was the legend of Ithaqua, who carried his victims with him into far places of the earth, in time and space, before leaving them behind. And the evidence was undeniable that my grandfather had been alive for part of that incredible journey, for if we had had any doubt, the things found in his pockets, the mementos carried from strange hidden places where he had been, and sent to us, were final and damning testimony—the gold plaque, with its miniature presentation of a struggle between ancient beings, and bearing on its surface inscriptions in cabalistic designs, the plaque which Dr. Rackham of Miskatonic University identified as having come from some place beyond the memory of man; the loathsome book in Burmese that revealed ghastly legends of that shunned and hidden Plateau of Leng, the place of the dread Tcho-Tcho people; and finally, the *revolting and bestial stone miniature of a hellish monstrosity walking on the winds above the earth!*



STATEMENT OF JOHN DALHOUSIE, division chief of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, issued from temporary quarters at Navissa Camp, Manitoba, 10/31/31:

This is my final word regarding the strange circumstances surrounding the disappearance of Constable Robert Norris from Navissa Camp last March 7th, and the discovery of his body on the 17th of this month in a snow bank four miles north of here.

My attitude in the matter will be clearly seen by the time the end of this statement is read. For the assistance of those to whom this matter is not so familiar, I want to chronicle briefly the facts leading up to it. On the 27th of February last, Robert Norris sent me the appended report, which apparently solved the now famed Stillwater mystery, a report which for reasons that will be obvious, could not be released. On the 7th of the following month, Robert Norris vanished without leaving a trace. On the 17th of this October, his body was found deep in a snow bank four miles north of here.

Those are the known facts. I append herewith the last report made to me by Robert Norris:

"Navissa Camp, 27 February, 1931: In view of the extreme difficulty of the task which lies before me in writing to you what I know of the mystery

at Stillwater, I take the liberty of copying for you in shortest possible form, the account which appeared in the *Navissa Daily* under date of 27 February, 1930, exactly a year ago at this writing:

> Navissa Camp, February 27: An as yet unverified story regarding the town of Stillwater on the Olassie trail thirty miles above Nelson has come to the editors of the *Daily.*
>
> It is said that no single inhabitant can be found in the village, and that travellers coming through the district can find no signs of anyone having left it. The village was last visited on the night of February 25th, just prior to the storm of that date. On that night all was as usual, according to all reports. Since then, nothing has been seen of the inhabitants.

"You will remember this case at once as the unsolved mystery which caused us so much trouble, and which earned us so much undeserved criticism. Something happened here last night which throws a faint light on the Stillwater mystery, affording us some vague clues, but clues of such nature that they can help us not at all, especially so far as staving off press criticism is concerned. But let me tell this from the beginning, just as it happened, and you will be able to see for yourself.

"I had put up with Dr. Jamison, in whose house at the northern end of the village I had been staying for years whenever I stopped over in Navissa Camp. I came to the Camp in early evening, and had hardly got settled when the thing happened.

"I had stepped outside for a moment. It was not cold, nor yet particularly warm. A wind was blowing, yet the sky was clear. As I stood there, the wind seemed to rise, and abruptly it grew strikingly cold. I looked up into the sky, and saw that many of the stars had been blotted out. Then a black spot came hurtling down at me, and I ran back toward the house. Before I could reach it, however, I found my path blocked; before me, the figure of a man fell gently into the snow banks. I stopped, but before I could go to him, another form fell with equal softness on the other side of me. And, lastly, a third form came down; but this form did not come gently—it was thrown to the earth with great force.

"You can imagine my amazement. For a moment, I confess that I did

not know just what to do. In that brief space of my hesitation, the sudden wind went down and the sharp cold gave place to the comparative mildness of the early evening. Then I ran to the closest form, and ascertained at once that the man was still living, and was apparently unhurt. The second, also a man, was likewise unhurt. But the third body was that of a woman; she was stone cold—her skin to the touch was icy to an astounding degree—and she had the appearance of having been dead for a long time.

"I called Dr. Jamison, and together we managed to get the three into the house. The two men we put to bed immediately, and for the woman we called the coroner, the only other doctor in Navissa Camp. We also had to summon other help, and Dr. Jamison called in two nurses. A quick examination proved that the men were, as I had conjectured, very little hurt. The same examination disclosed another astonishing point—the identification of these two men.

"You will remember that at about the time of the Stillwater case, on the night of the 25th of February, in fact, two men had left Nelson for Stillwater, and had vanished as mysteriously as the inhabitants of that town. These two men had given their names in Nelson as Allison Wentworth and James Macdonald; identification papers found on the bodies of these strange visitors from above proved conclusively that at least two of the men who were supposed to have been in Stillwater at the time the mysterious tragedy occurred had returned, for our visitors were none other than Wentworth and Macdonald. You can easily visualize with what anticipation I looked for a solution to the Stillwater mystery from these two men when once they regained consciousness.

"I resolved, in consequence, to keep a bedside watch. The doctors told me that Wentworth showed the best signs of coming out of his unconscious delirium first, and I took my place at his side, one of the nurses ready to take down anything Wentworth might say. Shortly after I had taken my position there, the body of the girl was identified by a resident of Navissa Camp who had already heard of her and had come to look at the body. The girl was Irene Masitte, the only daughter of the Masitte who ran the tavern at Stillwater. This indicated conclusively that the two men had been in Stillwater at the time of the inexplicable tragedy which swept its inhabitants off the face of the earth, and very probably were in the tavern at the moment the tragedy occurred, perhaps talking with this girl. So I thought at the moment.

"Naturally, I was deeply perplexed as to where the men and the girl might have come from, and also as to why the men were practically unhurt and the girl dead, dead for a great length of time, said Dr. Jamison, perhaps preserved by the cold. And, why and how did the men come gently to the earth, and why was the girl literally dashed to the ground? But all these puzzling questions were for the time being shoved into the background, so eager was I to get at the mystery which surrounded the Stillwater case.

"As I have already written, I had taken my place beside the bed of Wentworth, and listened eagerly for any hint he might drop in his delirium, for as he became warmed, he began to talk a great deal, though not always intelligibly. Some sentences and phrases could be made out, and these the nurse took down in shorthand. I copy a few of the sentences I heard as we bent over the bed:

"'Death-Walker . . . God of the Winds, you who walk on the wind . . . *adoramus te . . . adoramus te . . . adoramus te. . . .* Destroy these faithless ones, you who walk with death, you who pass above the earth, you who have vanquished the sky. . . . Light gleams from the mosques of Baghdad . . . stars are born in the Sahara . . . Lhassa, lost Lhassa, worship, worship, worship the Lord of the Winds.'

"These enigmatic words were followed by a deep and profound silence, during which the man's breathing struck me as highly irregular. Dr. Jamison, who was there, noticed it also, commenting on it as a bad sign, though there was no intimation as to what might have brought on this sudden irregularity unless it were some unconscious excitement. The delirious jumble meanwhile continued, even more puzzling than before.

"'Wind-Walker, disperse the fogs over England . . . *adoramus te. . . .* It is too late to escape . . . Lord of the Winds. . . . Fly, fly or He will come. . . . Sacrifice, sacrifice . . . a sacrifice must be, yes, must be made. . . . Chosen one, Irene. . . . Oh, Wind-Walker, sweep over Italy when the olive trees blossom . . . and the cedars of Lebanon, blue in the wind . . . cold-swept Russian steppes, over wolf-infested Siberia . . . onward to Africa, Africa. . . . Blackwood has written of these things . . . and there are others . . . the old ones, elementals . . . and back to Leng, lost Leng, hidden Leng, whence sprung Wind-Walker . . . and others. . . .'

"Dr. Jamison was much interested in the mention of 'elementals,' and since he appeared to know something of them, I asked him to explain. It

seems that there still exists an age-old belief that there are elemental spirits—of fire, water, air, and earth—all-powerful spirits subject to no one, spirits actually worshipped in some parts of the world. His excitement I thought rather exaggerated, and I shot questions at him.

"It is very difficult for me to chronicle what came out finally in answer to all my questions. It is something that had been kept carefully away from us, though how it could have been is puzzling to me. Even I hesitated at first to believe Dr. Jamison, though he appears to have known it for some time, and assures me that a number of people could tell odd stories if they wanted to. I remember that several anonymous reports of a highly suggestive nature were turned in to us, but I hardly dared suspect what lay behind them at the time.

"It seems that the inhabitants of Stillwater to a body performed a curious worship—not of any god we know, but of something they called an air elemental! A large thing, I am told, vaguely like a man, yet infinitely unlike him. Details are very distorted and unreliable. It is said to have been an air elemental, but there are weird hints of something of incredible age that rose out of hidden vastness in the far north, from a frozen and impenetrable plateau up there. Of this I can venture nothing. Dr. Jamison mentions a 'Plateau of Leng,' of which I have never heard save in the incoherent babblings of Wentworth. But what is most horrible, most unbelievable in the mystery of this strange communal worship, is the suggestion that the people of Stillwater *made human sacrifices to their strange god!*

"There are queer stories of some gigantic thing that these people summoned to their deeply hidden forest altars, and still weirder tales of something seen against the sky in the glare of huge pine fires burning near Stillwater by travellers on the Olassie trail. How much credence it is advisable to give these stories you must decide for yourself, for I am, frankly, in view of later developments which I will chronicle in their order, unable to give any opinion. Dr. Jamison, whom I regard as a man of great intelligence, assures me that the elemental stories are sincerely believed hereabouts, and admitted to my surprise that he himself was unwilling to condemn belief without adequate knowledge. This was, in effect, admitting that he himself might believe in them.

"The man Wentworth suddenly became conscious, and I turned from Dr. Jamison. He asked, naturally, where he was, and he was told. He did not

seem surprised. He then asked what year this was, and when we told him expressed only an irritated surprise. He murmured something about, 'An even year, then,' and aroused our interest the more.

"'And Macdonald?' he asked then.

"'Here,' we answered.

"'How did we come?' he asked.

"'You fell from the sky.'

"'Unhurt?' He puzzled over this for a moment. Then he said, 'He put us down, then.'

"'There was a girl with you,' said Dr. Jamison.

"'She was dead,' he answered in a tired voice. Then he turned his strangely burning eyes on me and asked, 'You saw Him? You saw the thing that walked on the wind? . . . Then He will return for you, for none can see Him and escape.'

"We waited a few moments, thinking to give him time to become more fully conscious, but alas, he lapsed into a semi-conscious state. It was then that Dr. Jamison, after another examination, announced that the man was dying. This was naturally a great shock to me, and this shock was emphasized when Dr. Jamison added that the man Macdonald would in all probability die without ever gaining consciousness. The doctor could not guess at the cause of death, beyond referring vaguely to an assumption that perhaps these men had become so inured to cold that they could no longer stand warmth.

"At first I could not guess the significance of this statement, but it came to me suddenly that Dr. Jamison was simply accepting the notion, which had occurred to all of us, that these two men had spent the year just passed above the earth, perhaps in a region so cold that warmth would now affect them in the same manner as extreme cold.

"Despite Wentworth's semi-conscious state, I questioned him, and, surprisingly enough, got a rather jumbled story, which I have pieced together as well as I could from the notes the nurse took and from my own memory.

"It appears that these two men, Wentworth and Macdonald, had got into Stillwater quite late, owing to a sudden storm which had come up and put them off the trail for a short time. They were eyed with distinct disfavor at the tavern, but insisted on remaining for the night, which the tavernkeeper, Masitte, did not seem to like. But he gave them a room, requesting

them to remain in it, and to keep away from the window. To this they agreed, despite the fact that they regarded the landlord's proposal as somewhat out of the ordinary.

"They had hardly come into the room when the inn-keeper's daughter, this girl, Irene, came in, and asked them to get her away from the town quickly. She had been chosen, she said, to be sacrificed to Ithaqua, the wind-walking elemental which the Stillwater people are said to have worshipped, and she had decided that she would flee, rather than die for a pagan god, of whose existence even she was not too sure.

"Yet, the girl's fear must have been convincing enough to impress the two men into going away with her. The inhabitants had recently, it seems, been working against the thing they had worshipped, and its anger had been felt. Because that night was the night of sacrifice, strangers were frowned upon. According to suggestions Wentworth made, he discovered that the Stillwater people had great altars in the pine forests nearby, and that they worshipped the thing they called variously Death-Walker or Wind-Walker at these altars. (Though you can imagine my skeptical view of this entire matter, this *does* seem to tie up with the stories of giant fires which Dr. Jamison mentioned travellers on the Olassie trail as having seen.)

"There was also some very incoherent mumbling about the thing itself, vague and horrible thoughts which seemed to obsess Wentworth, something about the towering height of the thing seen against the sky in the hellish glow of the nocturnal fires.

"Exactly what happened, I hardly dare venture to guess at. Out of Wentworth's incoherent and troubled speech, there came only one positive statement, the substance of which was simply, that the three of them, Wentworth, Macdonald, and the girl *did* flee the sacrificial fires and the village, and had been caught on the Olassie trail on the way to Nelson by the thing, which had picked them up and carried them along.

"After this statement, Wentworth became steadily more and more incoherent. He babbled a horrible story of the thing that swooped down after them as they fled in terror along the Olassie trail, and he blurted out, too, some terrible details of the mystery at Stillwater. From what I can make out, the thing that walked on the wind must have avenged itself on the villagers not only for their previous coldness toward it, but also because of the flight of Irene Masitte, who had been chosen for the sacrifice. At any rate, between

hysterical wails and shuddering adulations of the thing, there emerged from Wentworth's distorted speech a graphic and terrible picture of a giant monstrosity that came into the village from the forest, sweeping the people into the sky, seeking them out, one by one.

"I don't know how much of this I should chronicle for you, since I can understand what your attitude must be. Could it have been some animal, do you think? Some prehistoric animal which had lain hidden for years in the depths of the pine forest near Stillwater, that perhaps had been preserved alive by the cold and revived again by the warmth of the giant fires to become the god of the mad Stillwater people? This seems to me the only other logical explanation, but there still remain so many things not yet accounted for, that I think it would be much better to leave the Stillwater mystery among the unsolved cases.

"Macdonald died this morning at 10:07. Wentworth had not spoken since dawn, but he resumed shortly after Macdonald's death, repeating again the same vague sentences which we first heard from him. His incoherent murmurings leave us no alternative in regard to where he spent the past year. He seems to believe that he was carried along by this wind thing, this air elemental. Though it is fairly certain that neither of the missing men was anywhere reported throughout the past year, this story may be simply the product of an overburdened mind, a mind suffering from a great shock. And the seemingly vast knowledge of the hidden places of the earth, as well as the known, may have been derived from books.

"I say *may* have been derived, because in view of Wentworth's suggestive, almost convincing, murmurings, it becomes only a tentative possibility. I know of no book which chronicles the mystic rites at the Lamasery in Tibet, which tells of the secret ceremonies of the Lhassa monks. Nor do I know of any book which reveals the hidden life of the African Impi, nor of any pamphlet or monograph even so much as hinting at the forbidden and accursed designs of the Tcho-Tcho people of Burma, nor of anything ever written which suggests that there are strange hybrid men living under the snow and ice of Antarctica, that there exists today a lost kingdom of the sea, accursed R'lyeh, where slumbering Cthulhu, deep in the earth beneath the sea, is waiting to rise and destroy the world. Nor have I ever heard of the shunned and forbidden Plateau of Leng, where the Ancient Ones once ruled.

"Please do not think I exaggerate. I have never heard of these things before, yet Wentworth speaks as if he had been there, even hinting that these mysterious people have fed him. Of Lhassa I have heard vague hints, and of course I do remember having once seen a cinema containing what the producer called 'shots of Africa's vanishing Impi.' But of the other things, I know nothing. And if I can assume anything from the shuddering horror in Wentworth's semi-conscious voice as he spoke of these hidden things, I do not want to know anything.

"There was a constant reference, too, in Wentworth's mutterings, to a Blackwood, by whom he evidently meant the writer Algernon Blackwood, a man who spent some time here in Canada, says Dr. Jamison. The doctor gave me one of this man's books, pointing out to me several strange stories of air elementals, stories remarkably similar in character to the curious Stillwater mystery, yet nothing so paradoxically definite and vague. I can refer you to these stories if you do not already know them.

"The doctor also gave me several old magazines, in which are stories by an American, a certain H. P. Lovecraft, which have to do with Cthulhu, with the lost sea kingdom of R'lyeh, and the forbidden Plateau of Leng. Perhaps these are the sources of Wentworth's apparently authentic information, yet in none of these stories appears any of the horrific details of which Wentworth speaks so familiarly.

"Wentworth died at 3:21 this afternoon. An hour before, he passed into a coma from which he did not emerge again. Dr. Jamison and the coroner seemed to think that the exposure to warmth had killed the two men, Jamison telling me candidly that a year with the Wind-Walker had so inured the men to cold, that warmth like ours affected them as extreme cold would affect us normal men.

"You must understand that Dr. Jamison was entirely serious. Yet, his medical report read that the two men and the girl had died from exposure to the cold. In explanation he said, 'I may think what I please, Norris, and I may believe what I please—but I dare not write it.' Then, after a pause, he said, 'And, if you are wise, you will withhold the names of these people from the general public because questions are certain to arise once they become known, and how are you people going to explain their coming to us from the sky, and where they spent the year since the Stillwater mystery? And finally,

how are you going to react against the storm of criticism which will fall on you once more when the Stillwater case is reopened with such strangely unbelievable facts as we have gathered here from the lips of a dying man?'

"I think Dr. Jamison is right. I have no opinion to offer, absolutely none, and I am making this report only because it is my duty as an officer to do so, and I am making it only to you. Perhaps it had better be destroyed, rather than kept in our files from which it might at some future time be resurrected by a careless official or an inquiring newspaper man.

"As I have already told you, any opinion that I have to offer would be worthless. But, in closing, I want to point out two things to you. I want to refer you first to the report of Peter Herrick, in charge of the investigation at Stillwater last year, under date of 3 March, 1930. I quote from the report which I have at hand:

> On the Olassie trail, about three miles below Stillwater, we came upon the meandering tracks of three people. An examination of the tracks seemed to indicate that there were two men and one woman. A dogsled had been left behind along the trail, and for some inexplicable reason these three people had started running along the trail toward Nelson, evidently away from Stillwater. The tracks halted abruptly, and there was no trace of where they might have gone. Since there had been no snow since the night of the Stillwater mystery, this is doubly puzzling; it is as if the three people had been lifted off the earth.
>
> Another puzzling factor is the appearance, far off to one side of this point in the trail, in a line with the wandering footsteps of the three travellers, of a huge imprint, closely resembling the foot of a man—but certainly a giant—which appears to have been made by an unbelievably large thing, and the foot, though like that of a man, must have been webbed!

"To this I want to add some information of my own. I remember that last night, when I threw that startled glance into the sky and saw that the stars had been blotted out, I thought that the 'cloud' which had obscured the sky looked curiously like the outline of a great man. And I remember, too,

that where the top of the 'cloud' must have been, where the head of the thing should have been, there were two gleaming stars, visible despite the shadow, two gleaming stars, burning bright—*like eyes!*

"One more thing. This afternoon, a half mile behind Dr. Jamison's house, I came upon a deep depression in the snow. I did not need a second glance to tell me what it was. A half mile on the other side of the house there is another imprint like this; I am only thankful that the sun is rapidly distorting the outlines, for I am only too willing to believe that I have imagined them. *For they are the imprints of gigantic feet, and the feet must have been webbed!*"

Thus ends Robert Norris's strange report. Because he had carried it for some time with him, I did not receive the report until after I had learned of his disappearance. The report was posted to me on the 6th of March. Under date of March 5th, Norris has scrawled a final brief and terrible message in a hand which is barely legible:

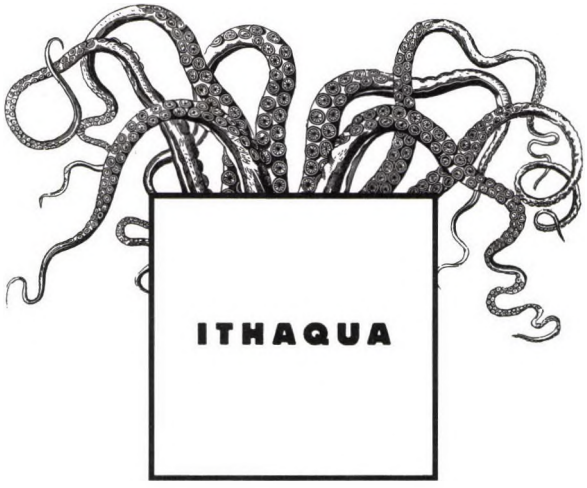
"5 March—Something is pursuing me! Not a night has passed since the occurrence at Navissa Camp to give me any rest. Always I have felt strange, horrible, yet invisible eyes looking down at me from above. And I remember Wentworth saying that none could live who had seen the thing that walked on the wind, and I cannot forget the sight of it against the sky, and its burning eyes looking down like stars in the haunted night! It is waiting."

It was this brief paragraph which caused our official physician to declare that Robert Norris had lost his mind, and had wandered away to some hidden place from which he emerged months later only to die in the snow.

I want to add only a few words of my own. Robert Norris did not lose his mind. Furthermore, Robert Norris was one of the most thorough, the keenest men under my orders, and even during the terrible months he spent in far places, I am sure he did not lose possession of his senses. I grant our physician only one thing: Robert Norris *had* gone away to some hidden place for those months. But that hidden place was not in Canada, no, nor in North America, whatever our physician may think.

I arrived at Navissa Camp by plane within ten hours of the discovery of Robert Norris's body. As I flew over the spot where the body was found, I saw far away on either side, deep depressions in the snow. I have no doubt what they were. It was I, too, who searched Norris's clothes, and found in his pockets the mementos he had brought with him from the hidden places where he had been: the gold plaque, depicting in miniature a struggle be-

tween ancient beings, and bearing on its surface inscriptions in weird designs, the plaque which Dr. Spencer of Quebec University affirms must have come from some place incredibly old, yet is excellently preserved; the incredible geological fragment which, confined in any walled place, gives off the growing hum and roar of winds far, far beyond the rim of the known universe!



IT WAS A CHINESE philosopher who said long ago that the truth, no matter how obvious and simple, was always incredible, because such complexity had become the social life of man that the truth became increasingly impossible to state. No reference to the strange affair of the Snow-Thing, Ithaqua, is more fitting, no comment more calculated to preface a final consideration of the facts.

In the spring of 1933 there pushed into the public prints various obscure paragraphs, most of them very muddled, concerning such apparently unrelated matters as the queer beliefs of certain Indian tribe remnants, the apparent incompetence of Constable James French of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, the disappearance of one Henry Lucas, and finally the vanishing of Constable French. There was also a brief uproar in the press regarding a certain statement released by John Dalhousie, division chief of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, from temporary quarters at Cold Harbor, Manitoba, on the eleventh of May, following some public criticism of Constable French and the general handling of the Lucas case. And finally, by means of a strange grapevine system of communication, apparently not by word of mouth, since no one was ever heard to speak of it, there was a certain incredible story of a Snow-Thing, the story of a strange god of the

great white silence, the vast land where snow lies for long months beneath a limitless, cold sky.

And yet these apparently unconnected phenomena to which the press referred with ever-increasing scorn were closely bound together by a sinister connection. That there are some things better unknown, that, indeed, there are certain hideous, forbidden things, Constable French discovered, and, after him, John Dalhousie, and on the eleventh of May, he wrote:

I am writing much against my wish in reply to harsh and unjustified criticism directed against me in the matter of the Lucas investigation. I am being especially harassed by the press because this case still remains unsolved and, with wholly unaccountable bitterness, it is being pointed out that Henry Lucas could not have walked from his house and vanished, despite the fixed and indisputable evidence that this is what Lucas did.

The facts, for those who come upon this statement without previous knowledge of the disappearance and the subsequent investigation by Royal Northwest Mounted Police Constable James French, are briefly these: On the night of the 21st of February last, during a light snowstorm, Henry Lucas walked out of his cabin on the northern edge of the village of Cold Harbor and was not seen again. A neighbor saw Lucas going toward the old Olassie trail near Lucas's cabin, but did not see him subsequently; this was the last time Lucas was seen alive. Two days later, a brother-in-law, Randy Margate, reported Lucas's disappearance, and Constable French was sent at once to inquire into the matter.

The constable's report reached my office two weeks later. Let me say at once that despite public belief to the contrary, the Lucas mystery was solved.

But its solution was so outré, so unbelievable, so horrible, that this department felt it must not be given to the public. To that decision we have held until today, when it has become apparent that our solution, however strange, must be released to stem the flood of criticism directed at this department.

I append herewith the last report of Constable James French:

"Cold Harbor, 3 March, 1933:

"Sir: I have hardly the courage to write this to you, for I must write something my nature rebels against, something my intelligence tells me cannot, must not, be—and yet, great God, *is!* Yes, it was as we were told—Lu-

cas walked out of his house and vanished: but we had not dreamed of the reason for his going, nor that something lurked in the forest, *waiting . . .*

"I got here on the twenty-fifth of February and proceeded at once to the Lucas cabin, where I met and spoke to Margate. He, however, had nothing to tell me, having come in from a neighboring village, found his brother-in-law missing, and reported the matter to us. Shortly after I saw him, he left for his own home in Navissa Camp. I went then to the neighbor who had last seen him. This man seemed very unwilling to talk, and I had difficulty in understanding him, since he is apparently very largely Indian, certainly a descendant of the old tribes still so plentiful around here. He showed me the place where he had last seen Lucas, and indicated that the vanished man's footprints had abruptly stopped. He said this rather excitedly; then, suddenly looking toward the forest across the open space, said somewhat lamely that of course the snow had filled in the other tracks. But the place indicated was windswept, where little snow stayed. Indeed, in some places the footprints of Lucas could still be seen, and beyond the place from which he supposedly disappeared, there are none of his, though there are footprints of Margate and one or two others.

"In the light of subsequent discoveries, this is a highly significant fact. *Lucas certainly did not walk beyond this spot, and he certainly did not return to his cabin.* He disappeared from this spot as completely as if he had never existed.

"I tried then, and I have tried since then, to explain to myself how Lucas could have vanished without leaving some trace, but there has been no explanation save the one I will presently chronicle, unbelievable as it is. But before I come to that, I must present certain evidence which seems to me important.

"You will remember that twice last year the itinerant priest, Father Brisbois, reported disappearances of Indian children from Cold Harbor. In each case we were informed that the child had turned up before we could investigate. I had not been here a day before finding out that these missing children had never turned up, that, indeed, there had been strange vanishings from Cold Harbor which had never been reported to us, that apparently the disappearance of Lucas was but one in a chain. Lucas, however, appears to have been the first white man to vanish.

"There were several singular discoveries which I quickly made, and these

left me with anything but a favorable impression; I felt at once that it was not a *right* sort of case. These facts seem to rank in importance:

"1) Lucas was pretty generally disliked. He had repeatedly cheated the Indians and, while intoxicated, had once tried to interfere in some matter apparently pertaining to religion. I consider this as motive, and it may yet be so—but not so obviously as I had first thought.

"2) The chiefly Indian population of Cold Harbor is either very reluctant to talk or refuses to talk at all. Some of them are downright afraid, some are sullen, and some are defiant and even warning. One Medicine Three-Hat, when questioned, said: 'Look, there are some things you are not to know. Of them is Ithaqua, whom no man may look upon without worship. Only to see him is death, like frost in the deep night.' No elucidation of this statement could be gained. However, it has since taken on much significance, as you will see.

"3) There is a curious ancient worship here. Of this, more below.

"Frequent hints of some connection between great bonfires in the pine forest skirted by the old Olassie trail, sudden, inexplicable snowstorms, and the vanishings, put me at last upon the thread of discovery tying up to the old worship of these Indians. I had thought at first that the villagers' guarded reference to the forest and the snow were but the expression of the natural fear of the elements common to people in isolated countries. Apparently, however, I erred grievously in this, for, on the second day after my arrival, Father Brisbois came into Cold Harbor, and he, seeing me at one of his brief services, sent an altar boy to tell me he would like to see me. I saw him after the services.

"He had assumed that I was looking into the disappearances he had reported to us, and expressed considerable surprise when he learned that the lost children had been reported found by their parents.

"'Then they suspected my intentions,' he said in explanation. 'And prevented an investigation. But, of course, you know that the children never did turn up?'

"I said that I knew it, and went on to urge him to tell us all he might know about the mysterious vanishings. His attitude, however, surprised me.

"'I can't tell you, because you wouldn't believe me,' he said. 'But tell me, have you been in the forest? Down along the old Olassie trail, for instance?'

And, at my negative, went on, 'Then go into the woods and see if you can find the altars. When you find them, come back and tell me what you make of them. I'll stay in Cold Harbor for two days or so.'

"That was all he would tell me. I saw then that there was something to be discovered in the forest and though the afternoon was on the wane, I set out along the old Olassie trail and cut into the woods, though not without carefully estimating the hours of daylight yet remaining. I went deeper and deeper—it is all virgin woods there, with some very ancient trees—and finally I came upon a trail through the snow. Since there had been a rather clever attempt made to disguise this trail, I felt I had hit upon something.

"I followed it and had no difficulty finding what Father Brisbois meant by the altars. They were peculiar circles of stone, around which the snow appeared to be all tramped down. That was my first impression, but when I got up next to the circles of stone I saw that the snow was like glass, smooth, but not slippery, and not apparently only from *human* footprints. Inside the circles, however, the snow was soft as down.

"These circles were quite large, fully seventy feet in diameter, and were crudely put together of some strange kind of frosted stone: or a white, glazed rock with which I am totally unfamiliar. When I put out a hand to touch one of these rocks, I was severely shocked by what was apparently an electrical discharge of some kind; add to this the fact that the stone is certainly of great age and incredibly cold, and you may conceive of the amazement with which I viewed this strange place of worship.

"There were three circles, not very far removed from each other. Having examined them from the outside, I entered the first circle and found, as I have pointed out before, that the snow was exceedingly soft. Here there were very distinct footprints. I think I must have looked at them in mild interest for some minutes before their significance began to dawn upon me. Then I dropped to my knees and examined them carefully.

"The evidence before my eyes was plain. The footprints were made by a man wearing shoes, certainly a white man, for the Indians hereabouts do not wear shoes, and the prints were the same as those made on the open space by Henry Lucas when he vanished. On the face of it, I felt I could work on the hypothesis that these prints had been made by Lucas.

"But the most extraordinary thing about the footprints was that they gave evidence that the man who had made them had neither walked into the

circle nor walked out of it. The point of entry—or, rather, the beginning of the line of prints—lay not far from where I stood; here was partly snow-covered evidence that he had been *thrown or dropped* into the circle. He had then risen and begun to walk around toward the circle's only entrance, but at this entrance his footprints hesitated, then turned back. He walked faster and faster, then he began to run, and abruptly his footprints stopped entirely, cut off toward the middle of the circle. There was no mistake about it, for, while the preceding footprints were slightly snow-covered, the light snowfall had apparently stopped coincident with the cessation of the footprints.

"As I was examining these curious prints, I had the uncomfortable feeling that I was being watched. I scanned the forest covertly, but nothing came into my line of vision. Nevertheless, the feeling of being under observation persisted, and a mounting uneasiness took possession of me, so that I felt a definite sense of danger within this strange and silent circle of stone deep in the hushed woods. Presently I emerged from the circular altar and went toward the forest in some apprehension.

"Then suddenly I came upon the site of great fires, and I remembered the half-hinted suggestions put forth by some of the natives of Cold Harbor. The fact that Lucas's footprints were within the stone circle certainly linked the fires to his disappearance, and, as I have pointed out, snow was obviously falling at the time Lucas stood within the stones. I remembered then, too, that there had occasionally been rumors of fires seen in the deep woods along the Olassie trail when that trail was still in use a few years ago. I examined the ashes, though, owing to encroaching darkness, I could not be as careful as I wished. Apparently only pine boughs had been burned.

"I now saw that not only was darkness closing down, but that the sky had clouded, and flakes of snow were already beginning to sift down through the trees. Here, then, was another point in evidence—the sudden oncoming of a snowstorm, when but a few moments before, the sky had been devoid of clouds. One by one those queer hints were taking tangible form before my eyes.

"All this time, I was still certain that someone was observing my every movement; so I calculated my movements in such a way that I might surprise anyone in the woods. The fires had been burned behind the altars, and as I turned, I faced the stone circles. Now, as I say, it was getting dark, and snow

was falling—but I saw something. It was like a sudden cloud of snow hanging over the altars, like a huge shapeless mass of thickly packed snow—not just a swirl of flakes, though snowflakes did seem to encircle it. And it did not have a white color, but rather a blue-green tint shading away into purple. This *may* have been the effect of the dusk which was rapidly invading the forest. I want to make clear to you the fact that I was not then conscious of anything strange, being fully aware of the weird light changes sometimes affecting one's vision at dusk.

"But, as I went forward, past the altars, I looked around. And then I saw that the upper half of that weird entity moved independently of the lower! As I stood looking up into the darkness, the thing began to fade away, just as if dissolving into the falling snow, until at last there was nothing there. Then I became frightened, with the fear that the thing that encompassed me, was all around me in the falling snow. For the first time in my life I was afraid of the woods and the night and the silent snow. I turned and ran, but not before I saw!—*Where the snow image had been, a pair of bright green eyes were suspended like stars in space above the circular altars!*

"I am not ashamed to confess that I ran as if a pack of wolves bayed at my heels. I still thank whatever powers there are for guiding my mad flight to the comparative safety of the Olassie trail, where it was still quite light, and where for the first time I paused. I looked back toward the woods, but there was nothing to be seen for the snow, now falling thickly.

"I was still afraid, and I half imagined that I heard whispering among the snowflakes, a hellish whispering urging me to return to the altars. So strong it was, so clear, that for one awful moment I stood wavering on the trail, almost ready to turn and plunge again into the ominous darkness of the forest. Then I broke the spell that held me and ran on down the trail toward Cold Harbor.

"I went directly to the house of Dr. Telfer, where Father Brisbois was staying. The priest was frankly alarmed at what he described as my 'wild and horror-struck appearance,' and Dr. Telfer wanted to give me a sedative, which I declined.

"I told them at once what I had seen. From the expression on his face, I gathered that what I was saying was neither exactly unexpected nor new to the priest. The doctor, however, made it rather plain from his comments that he considered me the victim of illusory phenomena common enough at

twilight. But Father Brisbois disagreed. In fact, the priest hinted that I had but penetrated a veil always present but seldom seen, that what I had seen was no illusion but indeed a tangible proof of a ghastly other world of which most human beings, mercifully, know and suspect nothing.

"He asked me whether I had noticed that the Indians came from very old stock, probably Asiatic in origin. I admitted that I had noticed this. Then he said something about worship of gods old before man was born into the world.

"I asked him what he meant by *old gods.*

"These are his words: 'There are deep, underground channels of knowledge that have seeped down to us from beings far removed from humanity. There is, for instance, the ghastly and suggestive account of Hastur the Unspeakable and his loathly spawn.'

"I protested that he had reference only to legend.

"He replied, 'Yes, but don't forget that there exists no legend which is not firmly rooted to something, even if that something existed in a long, long forgotten past beyond memory of man—malign Hastur, who called to his aid the spirits of the elements and subdued them to his will, those elementary forces which are still worshipped in far out-of-the-way places in this world—the Wind-Walker, and Ithaqua, god of the great white silence, the one god of whom no totems bear sign. After all, have we not our own Biblical legend of the struggle between elemental Good and Evil as personified by our deity and the forces of Satan in the pre-dawn era of our earth?'

"I wanted to protest, I wanted violently to say that what he hinted was impossible, but I could not. The memory of what I had seen hanging above the stone circles deep in the forest beyond Cold Harbor prevented me from speaking. This and the knowledge that one old Indian had mentioned to me a name that the priest had now spoken—*Ithaqua.*

"Seeing the trend of his words, I said, 'Do you mean that the Indians hereabouts worship this thing called Ithaqua, offering up their children as human sacrifice? Then how explain Lucas's vanishing? And who or what, actually, is Ithaqua?'

"'I mean just that, yes. That's the only theory explaining the loss of the children. As to Lucas: he was extremely unpopular, steadily cheating the Indians, and at one time got himself mixed up with them at the forest's edge; that was but a few days prior to his disappearance. As to Ithaqua and who

or what he is—I am not capable of answering. There is a belief that none but worshippers dare look upon him; to do so means death. What was it you saw above the altars? What observed you there? Ithaqua? Is he the spirit of water or of wind, or is he truly a god of this great white silence, the thing of snow, a manifestation of which you saw?'

"'But, human sacrifice, good God!' I exclaimed, and then, 'Tell me, has none of these children ever been discovered?'

"'I buried three of them,' said the priest thoughtfully. 'They were found in the snow not far from here, found encased in beautiful shrouds of snow soft as down, and their bodies were colder than ice, even though two of them still lived when found, only to die shortly after.'

"I did not know what to say. If I had been told this before going into the forest, I would frankly have scoffed at it, as Father Brisbois foresaw. But I saw something in that forest, and it was nothing human, nothing even remotely human. I am not saying, understand, that I saw what Father Brisbois meant by his 'god of the great white silence,' what the Indians call *Ithaqua*, no, but I *did* see something.

"At this point someone came to the house with the astounding announcement that Lucas's body had just been found, and the doctor was needed to examine it. The three of us immediately followed the Indian who had brought this message to a place not very far from the fur-trading post, where a large crowd of natives stood around what seemed at first to be a very large and gleaming snowball.

"But it was not a snowball.

"It was the body of Henry Lucas, cold as the stones in the circle I had touched, and the body was wrapped in a cloak of spun snow. I write *spun*, because it *was* spun. It was like an ineffably lovely gauze, brilliantly white with a subtle suggestion of green and blue, and it was like pulling away brittle, stiffened gauze when we tore the snow covering from the body.

"It was not until this wrapping had been torn away that we discovered Henry Lucas was not dead! Dr. Telfer could hardly credit his own senses, though there had been two previous cases similar to this. The body was cold, so cold we could hardly bear touching it, yet there was a faint beating of the heart, sluggish and barely perceptible, but it was there, and in the warmth of Telfer's house the breath came, and the heart's beating became firmer.

"'It's impossible,' said the doctor, 'but it's happening. Yet he's dying, sure as I'm standing here.'

"'Hope that he may become conscious,' said the priest.

"But the doctor shook his head. 'Never.'

"And then Lucas began to talk, like a man in delirium. First it was an indistinguishable sound, a low monotone like a far-away, uneven humming. Then words began to come, slowly, few and far between, and finally phrases and sentences. Both the priest and I jotted them down, and compared notes later. This is a sample of what Lucas said:

"'*Oh, soft, lovely snow . . . Ithaqua, take Thou my body, let the snow-god carry me, let the great god of the white silence take me to the foot of that greater . . . Hastur, Hastur, adoramus te, adoramus te . . . How soft the snow, how drowsy the winds, how sweet with the smell of locust blossoms from the south! Oh, Ithaqua, on to Hastur . . .*'

"There was much more of this, and most of it meaningless. It may be an important point to make that there is definite knowledge that Lucas had no training in Latin. I hesitate to comment on the strange coincidence of Lucas's mentioning Hastur so shortly after Father Brisbois mentioned this ancient being.

"Later in Lucas's wanderings, we managed to piece together a story, the story of his disappearance. Apparently he had been drawn from his cabin that night into the snowstorm by the sound of unearthly music combined with an urgent whispering which seemed to come from just beyond the cabin. He opened the door and looked out and, seeing nothing, had then gone out into the snow. I should venture to guess that he had been hypnotized—though that seems far-fetched. He was set upon by 'something from above'—his own words, which he later qualified by saying of it that it was a wind with 'snow in it.' By this he was carried away, and he knew no more until he found himself dropped into the circle of stones in the forest. Then he was aware of great fires burning in the woods, and of the Indians before the altars, many of them flattened out in the snow, worshipping. And above him, he saw what he spoke of as 'a cloud of green and purple smoke with eyes'—could it have been the same thing I saw above the altars? And, as he watched, this thing began to move, to come lower. He heard music again, and then he began to feel the cold. He ran toward the entrance, which stood open, but he could not pass through—it was as if some great invisible hand

held him away from outside. Then he became frightened, and he ran madly around and around and around, and finally he cut across the circle. And then he was lifted from the earth. It was as if he were in a cloud of soft, whispering snow. He heard music again, and chanting, and then, terribly, far in the background, a ghastly ululation. Then he lost consciousness.

"After that, his story is by no means clear. We can gather that he was taken somewhere—either far underground or far above the earth. From some of the phrases he let drop, we might suspect that he had been on another planet, were this not absolutely impossible. He mentioned Hastur almost incessantly, and occasionally said something about other gods called Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Lloigor, and others, and mumbled queer, disjointed phrases about the blasted land of the Tcho-Tcho people. And he spoke as if this were a punishment he had incurred. His words made Father Brisbois very uneasy, and several times I am sure that the good priest was praying to himself.

"He died about three hours after being found, without gaining consciousness, though the doctor said that his state was normal, except for the persistent cold and his being apparently unaware of us and the room.

"I hesitate to offer any solution beyond giving you these facts. After all, these things speak more clearly than any words. Since there is no means of identifying any of the Indians present at those hellish services in the woods, there can be no prosecution of any kind. But that something fatal happened to Lucas in those stone circles—probably as a result of his brush and interference with the Indian worshippers—remains indisputable. How he was taken there, and how he was transported to the place where his body was finally found is explainable only if we accept his terrible story.

"I suggest that in the circumstances we would be quite justified in destroying those altars and issuing stern warnings to the Indians of Cold Harbor and the surrounding country. I have ascertained that dynamite is obtainable in the village, and I propose to go out and dynamite those hellish altars as soon as I have the proper authority from you to do so.

"Later: I have just learned that there are a great number of Indians making off into the woods. Apparently there is to be another meeting to worship at those altars, and, despite my strange feeling of being observed—as from the sky—my duty is clear. I shall follow as soon as I dispatch this."

That is the complete text of Constable French's final report to me. It reached my office on the fifth of March, and on that day I wired instructions to him to proceed with the dynamiting, and also to arrest any native suspected of being a member of the group who worshipped at those strange altars.

Following this, I was forced to leave headquarters for a considerable time, and when I returned, I found the letter from Dr. Telfer telling me that Constable French had disappeared before receiving my telegram. I later ascertained that his disappearance took place on the night he dispatched his report to me, on the night that the Indians worshipped at the altars near the Olassie trail.

I sent Constable Robert Considine to Cold Harbor immediately, and I myself followed within twenty-four hours. My first business was to carry out myself those instructions I had wired to French, and, I went into the woods and dynamited those altars. Then I devoted myself to finding trace of French, but there was absolutely nothing to find. He had disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up.

But it was not the earth that had swallowed him up. On the night of the seventh of May, during a violent blizzard, Constable French's body was found. It was lodged in a deep snowbank not far from Dr. Telfer's house. All evidence showed that it had been dropped from a great height, and the body was wrapped in layer after layer of brittle snow, like spun gauze!

"Death from exposure to cold!" What ironic, empty words those are! How little they tell of the colossal evil lurking beyond the veil! I know what Constable French feared, what he more than suspected.

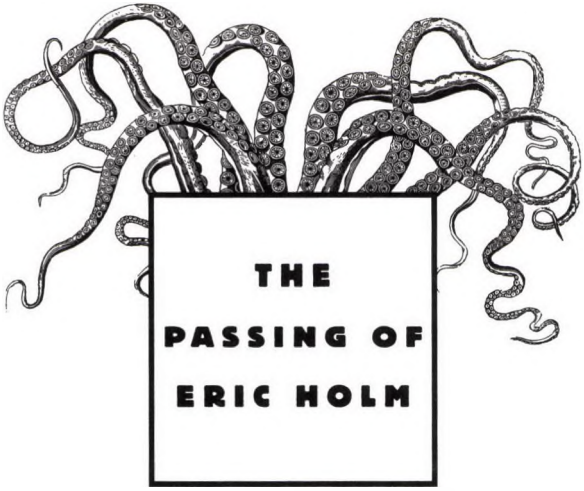
For all that night, and all last night, I saw from my window in Dr. Telfer's house, a huge, shapeless mass of snow bulking high into the sky, a huge, sentient mass surmounted by two inscrutable, ineffably cold green eyes!

There are even now rumors that Indians are gathering again for another meeting at the site of those accursed altars. That shall not and must not happen, and if they persist, they must be forcibly removed from the village and scattered throughout the provinces. I am going now to break up their hellish worship.

But, as the world now knows, John Dalhousie did not carry out his plan. For on that night he vanished, only to be found three nights later as Constable French and Henry Lucas were found before him—wrapped in ineffably beautiful snow, like spun gauze, scintillating and gleaming in the wan

moonlight, like those others who had suffered the vengeance of Ithaqua, the Snow-Thing, the god of the great white silence.

The department scattered the Indians throughout the provinces, and all persons were forbidden to enter the forest bordering the unused Olassie trail. But somewhere, in the forest night, sometime they may gather again, murmur and bow low, offer their children and their enemies as sacrifices to the elemental object of their worship, and cry out to him as Lucas cried, *"Ithaqua, take Thou my body . . . Ithaqua . . ."*



ERIC HOLM, IN COMMON with millions of other human beings, might have been fittingly and completely biographed by saying of him that he was born and presently died. Indeed, so it might well have been with him, had not his passing been so extraordinary.

The facts of his life may be summed up briefly enough. He was a childless widower living on a secure income. In person he was a colorless little man about whom the only distinguishing thing was an absurdly inexcusable moustache, the incongruity of which on his pallid face had penetrated even the thickheadedness of the corner policeman whom Holm passed at least once daily on his way home from the newsstand.

But certainly that policeman did not realize, when he saw Holm returning to his residence on the afternoon of April 3, 1939, that the package which Holm was carrying beneath his arm was anything but a harmless and unassuming purchase.

Yet, at the rather astonishing inquest, Jeremy Lansing, apparently Holm's only friend, inferred that Holm was on that fateful afternoon carrying beneath his arm his death, when Lansing declared that Holm died because he bought a book.

The policeman admitted that on that afternoon, the last Holm had

been seen alive by anyone save Lansing, Holm had certainly been carrying a package which looked like a carefully wrapped book.

The matter was virtually placed beyond all doubt when Mr. Sanderton of Sanderton and Harker, Book Importers, came forward and stated that Holm had on the afternoon of April 3 bought a book in their Fourth Avenue store.

The title of the book was simply *Confessions of the Mad Monk Clithanus*, a priceless and rare volume, which, owing to the present economic crisis, Sanderton and Harker had let go at a very moderate price.

Apart from the policeman and Sanderton, there were two other witnesses at the inquest. One was a young man who gave his name as Johnny Hekler, whose rather garbled story of having seen some vague but frightening thing slide over the wall of Holm's garden was at first discounted owing to the young man's reputation for too frequent attentions to a constant and well-filled companion in his hip pocket.

The other was Lansing, a middle-aged gentleman of sober mien and nautical bearing, considerably supported by his large and bushy sideburns cut in a fashion for decades out of style.

It was Lansing's deposition which split the press to have half of the newspapers calling for his life as the murderer of his best friend, and the other half darkly hinting at deep-laid plots by certain representatives of foreign powers, and which eventually left the coroner's jury to take press censure for gullibility. Apart from minor persons called to verify the conditions of the finding of Holm's body, Lansing was the last witness called to testify.

"Please tell us, Mr. Lansing," asked the coroner, "what you meant by saying that Mr. Holm died because he bought a book?"

Lansing considered the coroner and the jury for a few moments before replying. Then he spoke.

"It was this way, gentlemen," he said. "Mr. Holm had got into the habit of buying a good lot of books on witchcraft and such matters, and he'd got quite set on trying out some of those old formulas. We did try out a few, but of course, nothing ever happened."

A member of the jury rose at this point to request more detailed information regarding the unsuccessful experiments. But the coroner decided that such details would contribute nothing to the matter at hand. Lansing was instructed to continue.

"Well, last Monday night—say about six-thirty, Holm called me on the telephone," he went on. "You'll remember the night, gentlemen—a muckish night with a bit of fog from the sea. He told me he'd just bought another book—the real thing, this time. There was something worth trying in the book, and would I come right over? I said I would, having nothing better to do; so over I went.

"He had the book all right. *Confessions of Clithanus,* as Mr. Sanderton has already mentioned. I looked it over. It was supposed to be a book of revelations written by a mad monk somewhere on the coast of England and privately printed. It was fairly old, and printed in Latin, though it was easy enough to read for all that.

"Holm pointed out certain chapters, and I looked through them. They concerned something which the monk claimed to have called out of the sea—some kind of queer animal with a funny sort of name. I've forgotten it now, but if I could look at the book for a minute, no doubt I could find it again."

The coroner accordingly handed the book down to Mr. Lansing, who, after a few moments of diligent search, looked up and announced that he had found it.

"It's this," he said, reading, "'spawn of Cthulhu from the sunken kingdom of R'lyeh!' That's the animal, one of the spawn, which Holm said he could call up from the sea."

At this point a member of the jury rose to express the hope that Lansing would proceed as quickly and as directly as possible to the facts concerning Holm's death. The coroner instructed Lansing to proceed accordingly, but it was apparent shortly after Lansing had again taken up his story that he had not diverged in any detail from his leisurely method.

"This animal seems to have been a sort of evil being—so the book said, at any rate—and was banished and sent back into the sea by Augustine, then Bishop over Clithanus. The formula for summoning this beast from the sea was given by the monk, who wrote that this beast could be used by a wise man to be sent against his enemies.

"Holm proposed that he call the beast up that night and send him out after me. I'd be safe enough, of course, because he'd send along the monk's formula of protection and of sending the beast back to the place from which it came.

"Well, gentlemen, naturally, I put no faith in the business, especially since so many other trials had come to naught. So I agreed readily enough, though, to tell the truth, I was getting a bit tired of his everlasting experiments that didn't ever work out.

"We set on the hour of ten o'clock for the trial."

"You mean ten o'clock that night?" put in the coroner. "Why couldn't it have been done in the daytime?"

"Oh, Mr. Holm would never experiment in the daytime. You see, he always looked to have one of those experiments come out—and that would never do by day."

The coroner nodded.

"Well, we sat and talked for a bit, he and I, and at nine o'clock, I went home. For the first quarter hour or so, I forgot all about the formula to protect myself, and it wasn't until five minutes of ten or so that I thought of it. Then I began to repeat the formula—"

"Have you a copy of the formula?" asked a member of the jury.

Lansing nodded. "Yes, it's contained in the book. It's in old Latin, and it's full of very odd references to Ancient Gods and such things. It's quite beyond me, of course, but all I had to do was repeat the formula.

"Well, I was a little over halfway through the thing, when I heard something snuffling about near the window of my library. I confess that I got nervous at that, even though I didn't believe in any such things. So I hurried the formula a bit.

"Then I heard my front door open, and a moment later queer, shuffling footsteps coming down the hall. And believe me, gentlemen, I rattled off that Latin faster than I ever thought I could do it. I got it done just when the noise of something coming down the hall got up to my library door.

"When I finished reciting that formula the noise stopped, too. I was near to being paralyzed with the shock of the thing; so I stood there a bit and listened. Then I heard the noise again—footsteps going back down the hall and out the front door. I didn't hear the door close and when I saw it later, it was standing open.

"I finally managed to get up my courage and look out into the hall. Gentlemen, there was nothing there. But there had been something there, and whatever had been there was soaking wet, because there was a trail of water all over my carpet in the hall, and nasty-looking footprints."

Those in the court looked puzzled as Lansing paused.

"What kind of footprints?" asked the coroner.

"Oh, nothing I'd ever seen before. Something like a big frog's. Webbed feet—but big, very big, and irregular—yes, gentlemen, most irregular. Believe me, it set me up to see them there, and the smell, too. Like the sea. Of course, you know there was a fog that night, and with the door open, why the smell could have come from that—but it was so strong, and there was something else about it, something animalish!

"I stood for a few moments looking at the tracks. Then I thought of Holm. So I pulled myself together and went to the telephone. He was waiting, I guess, because he answered right away.

"I said who I was and then I told him, 'I think that beast of yours came all right, Holm. Left a nice mess of wet tracks on my hall carpet, I must say.' That's what I said to him.

"'Did you see it?' he asked me.

"'Oh, no, thanks,' I said. 'I saw its footprints and I can still smell it. That's quite enough for me.'

"I could hear him laughing. Then he said, 'It's too bad you didn't see it. Tell you what we'll do next time—we'll reverse it. You send it to me. I'll take a look at it before I send it back—' Then he paused a bit, and I asked whether anything was the matter. 'There's someone at the door, I think. Just a minute—why, by George, I think he's coming right in.'

"Then he went away from the telephone."

Lansing paused again, swallowed with some difficulty, and clasped his hands tightly together.

"Then, gentlemen, then—I heard him scream—a terrible scream it was. And I heard furniture being turned over, and things being torn, curtains and such like—and then horrid grunting sounds, awful little croaks and grunts."

Lansing paused again.

"I called into the telephone, but he didn't answer. No one answered. His man wasn't home—it was his day out, anyway. I called and called, and I could hear something all the time—a nasty, horrid sound like something—something eating.

"Then, gentlemen, I called the police.

"I met them in front of Holm's house and went right in with them. The

front door was standing open on his waiting room—and, gentlemen, there were tracks there, like those in my hall, wet, nasty tracks that smelled like the deep sea, a slimy seaweed smell. And the tracks went all the way in, through the waiting room and around into the library.

"There we found Holm. He was dead. He had been sort of pulled to—to pieces. And he wasn't quite all there. I couldn't look at him, gentlemen, and he my best friend. I couldn't stand the library, either, and got back into the waiting room as quick as I could. The library had a smell twenty times worse than the one in the waiting room.

"After a while I went back and showed the police the telephone—it was hanging out of its cradle—just the way he'd left it. And then I picked up the book, too.

"A little later I went with the police on the trail of those footprints. They went out the back way, through the garden, where they dented in the ground fairly well, showing that the thing must have had a good deal of weight, and over the garden wall. From there they turned seaward and we lost them."

Lansing shuddered and stopped. He looked from the coroner to the jury and back again.

The coroner appeared to be considering the story.

"Of course," he said presently, "you can realize how we react to such a narrative, even with the authentic evidence we seem to have. But there is one thing that puzzles me. You said that Holm would send back with you the formula for your protection and for sending the beast back to the place from which it came. I assumed that Mr. Holm meant that your reciting the formula would send the beast back to the sea."

Lansing nodded vigorously. "Oh, yes, yes, absolutely—he did."

"But, since the beast appears to have followed the appointed order of the formula—in coming in response to Mr. Holm's summons, and in being repulsed by your formula—I am at a loss to understand why it did not return directly to the sea instead of going back to destroy Mr. Holm."

A breathless silence hung in the room.

Lansing fumbled awkwardly in his pockets and drew out a piece of paper, twice folded. Then he put on a pair of worn spectacles and peered at the writing on the paper. Following this, he opened the ancient volume which he still held on his lap.

Then he looked up, swept the room with a nervous glance.

"I wondered about that, too," he said. "I thought that perhaps I had bungled it or something. So I looked it up in the book—the formula, that is, before I turned the book over to you.

"You see, Holm had written out the formula for me. It's on this piece of paper, just the way I recited it. Now, if you'll look at the book, you'll see that the original formula for sending the beast is printed on page thirty-two, and that the formula for sending it back to the sea starts on the bottom of page thirty-three and is complete on page thirty-four. Then, if you'll look a little farther, you'll see that there's another formula started on the bottom of page thirty-five and finished on the top of page thirty-six. If you'll compare the formula started on page thirty-three with that started on page thirty-five, you'll find that they read exactly alike.

"When Holm copied that formula out of the book, he turned over two leaves instead of one. While the two formulas start exactly alike, they don't end up alike. Gentlemen, they're altogether different.

"The formula he meant to give me was for sending the beast back to the sea; because in his haste he did not notice that he turned two pages, and because they read alike at the beginning. The formula he gave me was for sending the beast back upon the man who had first sent it out!"



THERE IS A TENDENCY on the part of the vast majority of people not only to take one another for granted, but to take all the aspects of their existence in the same manner. I sometimes think we are all too prone to accept as immutable law the scientific order of things, and not ready enough to challenge that order. Yet scientific laws are being altered and broken daily; new concepts come to the fore and take the place of the old; and they in turn are replaced by yet new theories based on seemingly equally irrefutable facts.

But in actuality many only recently discovered facts have their beginnings in time before man's recording, and it was certainly in such a distant past that the so-called "Malvern mystery" had its origin. To some extent it is a mystery still, for no one can satisfactorily explain what was found at Hydestall, nor where it came from, nor how it came to be there in the first place.

My own involvement in the mystery dated only to the night the Lynwold constable, John Slade, roused me from sleep by pounding on the door of my combined office and home and, on my raising a window to call down, told me he had brought Geoffrey Malvern to see Dr. William Currie. "Found him out of his head," offered Slade in brief explanation. I dressed,

went downstairs, and helped Slade bring the young man into my office, where he managed to sit down without collapsing, though he seemed ever on the verge of falling together; there he huddled, hands covering his face, shuddering and trembling as if from the effects of a profound shock.

I glanced at Slade, who stood fingering the rough stubble on his chin, and my eyes apparently asked the question that was on my tongue, for Slade shook his head helplessly and shrugged; so it was obvious that he had come upon Geoffrey in this condition, and brought him directly to my office. I went over to Geoffrey and put my hand gently but firmly on his shoulder.

He groaned. But in a moment his hands slid away from his face and he looked up. I was unable to keep from betraying my surprise: I could hardly believe that this drawn, chalk-pale, mud-splattered face, with black, unrecognizing eyes yet lit with a burning, intense, haunted light, could be the face of Lord Malvern's son. Though there was not the slightest sign of recognition, the expression on his face, the intentness of his eyes now that they had become accustomed to the light, were evidence that he looked at someone or something he saw in his mind's eye, for his face began to work, his lips twisting and trembling, and his fingers clenched.

"What happened, Geoffrey?" I asked persuasively.

At the sound of my voice, he doubled up once more, huddling in the chair, burying his distraught face in his hands, and made a kind of whimpering, moaning sound, as of a man in deadly terror—one of the most unpleasant sounds a medical man can hear.

It was then, when he opened his hands wider than before, that the stone dropped from one of them and fell to the floor. Geoffrey did not appear to have noticed his loss; so I stooped and retrieved it. It was a queer, oddly-shaped stone in the form of a five-pointed star, suggesting manufacture; and yet its appearance gave the lie to that suggestion. Nevertheless, it was in part at least the product of human hands; for it bore an inscription, now partly encrusted over, but one I felt confident could be read. Indeed, I could make out three letters of what appeared to be a signature following the inscription: AV. V. . . . The age of the stone was indeterminable, but the inscription being Latin, its general aspect and its encrustations, which suggested that the stone had been in the sea, indicated that it was at least several centuries old.

But the most curious aspect of the stone and that first contact with it was this: I had no sooner taken it up than I was conscious of a strange sense of power, a kind of benign strength that seemed to flow through me as a medium from some other place; this was a sensation I was destined never to be without as long as the stone was on my person. Moreover, there was in addition as noticeable a sense of urgent direction, as if there was something connected with the stone that most vitally needed to be done. It seems to me now, writing in retrospect, that it was this more than Malvern's condition which impelled me to probe into the mystery and so perhaps save Lynwold and the surrounding countryside from the horror which might have broken loose upon them.

At the moment, however, I was too disturbed to heed these strong impressions. I held the stone before Geoffrey's eyes, raising his head by his tousled dark hair, and forcing him to look at it.

"Where did you get this, Geoffrey?" I asked.

"The stone!" he murmured. For a moment his eyes were clear of the haunting horror that filled them, but he gave no sign of having heard my question. Then he began to sway a little, back and forth, muttering and murmuring brokenly to himself, and groaning as if in physical agony.

Clearly, nothing could be done, save to give him a sedative and get him to bed. This I did, sending Slade to take him in my car to Lord Malvern's gaunt old home up the seacoast. Then I telephoned Lord Malvern to explain that Geoffrey had been found wandering on the streets in a dazed condition, saying that I had given him a sedative and recommending that he be put to bed at once. I promised to be up in the morning and take a look at him. Lord Malvern was unusually abrupt, but this I interpreted as prompted by his suspicion that his son had been up to mischief, for relations were strained between father and son, owing to Geoffrey's not infrequent escapades.

It was not until the following day that I learned Geoffrey Malvern's movements in outline. He had set out from home alone the previous morning for a long walk over the lowlands near the seashore. In a meandering way he had made for the ruined priory near his father's estate, which he had reached shortly after noon. At about four in the afternoon, he had stopped off at a tavern near the priory along the coast road and eaten a light lunch; subse-

quently he had paused briefly at the small cottage where Malvern's former gardener now lived. The young man had seemed quite natural; both the tavern-keeper and the ex-gardener testified that Geoffrey had joked quite heartily before continuing on his way.

He had been seen returning to the priory before five o'clock, and several Lynwold motorists had seen him reading in the shade of a yew grove near the ruins during the course of the hours between five and dusk. At or near dusk, Jeremy Cotton, a schoolmaster, had passed the priory on foot, and, catching sight of Geoffrey, had cut off the coast road and into the priory grounds to talk to him. Geoffrey had been at this time busy poking about the ruins. When Cotton came up, he had evidently just come upon a queer sort of stone which he had shown to the schoolmaster; Cotton's description of it, and his recital of their attempt to decipher its inscription, convinced me that the stone was identical with the one now in my possession. Cotton remembered that Geoffrey had been intensely curious about the star-shaped stone; he had been struck at the time by what he now thoughtfully termed an "undue fascination." Asked about the book Geoffrey had been carrying, Cotton identified it as James' *Cathedrals of England,* and added that Geoffrey had told him he intended to visit the ruined Cathedral of Hydestall, which loomed just over the horizon not far from the priory.

These facts I managed to establish. Thereafter followed a blank interval, and then, shortly after midnight, occurred Geoffrey's entrance into Lynwold, in the condition in which Slade had found him. Something had happened in that interval between dusk and midnight to temporarily unbalance Geoffrey Malvern. The mystery intrigued me more than anything in my previous experience, and I was, moreover, impelled to solve it, I know now, by a power beyond my control, though I had not anticipated at that time that Geoffrey Malvern might recover and be able to tell his own story, confirming such discoveries as were made.

Far from having any light thrown on the mystery in my visit to Malvern-by-the-Sea that morning, I was more mystified than ever—not so much by Geoffrey's condition, which had changed very little; but rather because of Lord Malvern's attitude. He asked me to say nothing of the affair to anyone, and in the course of his conversation with me he dropped several hints that seemed to link Geoffrey's inexplicable madness with certain of the young man's Oxford activities. However, he did not seem to want the mystery in-

vestigated at all, and yet in his reference to the Oxford episodes as scandalous, Lord Malvern provided the second of the clues which was to solve the puzzle. The first was the star-stone itself, but this I did not then know. But I began to wonder that evening whether there might not be some connection between some affair at Oxford and the mutterings of Malvern in delirium? Perhaps even between the five-pointed stone and the Oxford scandals? I remembered distinctly that several disgraceful occurrences had led to the sending down of four young men from Oxford, and only Geoffrey's influence had saved him from a like fate.

So, that evening I turned to the stone and cleaned away some of the encrustations so that I could decipher the inscription on it. Fortunately, the most important parts of the inscription could still be read, though they required study, and even the fact that all the key words were present did not make my task much lighter. Such words and letters as had been rubbed completely away were few, and could easily be supplied. The inscription, when I had translated it, was enigmatic and vague. It read:

> The five-pointed star being the key, with this key I imprison you in the Name of Him Who Created All Things, Spawn of Elder Evil, Accursed in the Sight of God, Follower of Mad Cthulhu, who dared return from ever damned R'lyeh, I imprison you. May none ever effect your freedom.
>
> AUGUSTINE, BISHOP

The inscription appeared to be that of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, famed among churchmen. This was the first intimation of fact I had in regard to the stone's actual age.

The translation strengthened the connection in my mind between the stone and Geoffrey's derangement. And did the stone not refer to "dark things" by inference at least in its inscription? There had been "dark things" done at Oxford, according to guarded accounts which had been made public. I began to believe then that the key to the mystery might possibly lie in the Oxford activities, or, if not the key, at least some tenable explanation that might help to discover the key. Why not, I thought, ask down one or two of the

boys who had been dismissed from Oxford and question them frankly about the affairs which had brought them to disgrace?

Accordingly, I dispatched a wire to Soames Hemery, whose address I found on a letter he had sent to the *Times* anent the affair which had resulted in his being sent down from college. I suggested that Hemery bring along one or two of the other young men implicated in the scandal, if possible, and explained that Geoffrey's health and well-being lay in the balance.

Hemery and Duncan Vernon, both friends of Geoffrey, arrived early next morning. Both seemed to be energetic and enthusiastic young men, though with a certain air of restraint about them, and both were anxious to be of all assistance possible. Their questions were curiously insistent once they knew Geoffrey's condition. Above all, what had Geoffrey said?

"Nothing coherent," I answered promptly. And yet I could not help reflecting that he had spoken distinctly enough, if one but had the keys to his subject. He had said several times, "Something from out there!" I repeated this, and mentioned the star-stone Geoffrey had been carrying.

Vernon's eyes were far away, and there was a slight, if troubled smile on his lips. "You saw the stone, Doctor?" he asked presently. "What became of it?"

I went to the cabinet where I had put the five-pointed star-stone and brought it, together with the inscription and my translation, to Vernon. Hemery, too, came crowding close, and the two of them, unable to conceal a mounting excitement, handled the stone wonderingly.

"He did find it then," Vernon murmured. "Pried it off something, by the look of it."

"And called it out," added Hemery.

"This translation is excellent, Doctor," said Vernon.

"I'm afraid you have some knowledge I don't have," I admitted.

At this point our discussion was interrupted by Slade, who came in hurriedly, and said without preamble, "Old Cramton's been found dead and they want you to examine his body."

Cramton was a solitary fisherman who lived in a hut on the far side of Lynwold. I assumed instantly that his death was a natural one, since he had been an old man for as long as I could remember.

"What seems to have taken him off?" I asked conversationally.

"Nobody knows. He was found in the cave those boys discovered under the old priory."

Hemery and Vernon leaned forward, suddenly interested. I, too, was surprised at mention of the priory, and at the introduction of a hitherto unknown cave beneath it.

"One thing at a time, John," I said. "What boys?"

"The three who got lost yesterday, Doctor."

"I'm afraid I know nothing about them," I admitted. "Suppose you just tell us."

"Henry Kopps' two boys, and Jibber Cloy's Albert, they were," said Slade, and launched into his story, which was simple enough.

On the afternoon of the previous day, the three small boys had gone up to the ruins of the priory and failed to come back. Dusk fell, and night came down, and still the boys did not return. A group of older boys set out to look for them, and found them at last, safe on the seashore far beyond Lynwold and still farther from the priory, dazed and frightened, and with no idea how they had got there. Questions put to them had brought forth a queer story. They had gone to the ruins, where they had found a cave and passageway leading beneath, and had gone down to explore. They had crept along the cave until they had come upon a queer bundle in the darkness. They had felt around this, it being too dark to see anything, and had pulled a button off what seemed to be a coat or cloak. Then their hands had come into contact with a face, and they had got terribly frightened and had run. They thought they were lost, and for a long time wandered around in a perfect maze of caves, in some of which there was water—lots of it—until finally they had come out on the seashore, with no idea where they were until the exploring party had come upon them. That was well after midnight. Had they seen anything at the priory? Yes, they had. Just at dusk, but there was no describing it. "Like something from the animal park in London," said one of the boys.

The button the boys had found was identified as an old brass button belonging to a coat well-known as the property of Cramton. He was accordingly sent for, but could not be found. It came out finally that he had not been seen for the last few days—not since the evening of Geoffrey's strange attack. The button, coupled with the disappearance of the fisherman and

the story of the curious bundle with the face the boys felt, caused a search for his body. It had been found in the priory cave when the tide was low, but in a strange, incomprehensible condition. As medical examiner, I was needed at the undertaker's shop.

The suggested connection with Geoffrey's experience was too patent to ignore. I wasted no time asking further questions but, inviting my guests to accompany me, went along with Slade to view Cramton's body, which was indeed in a remarkable condition—cold almost to iciness, and as rigid. He might well have been frozen, if this had not been so utterly impossible. As it was, the cause of death could be set down to whatever it was had crushed Cramton; for he was crushed, fully as much as if the priory had collapsed on him, his bones splintered and his flesh horribly mangled.

It was the sight of Cramton's body which impelled Geoffrey's young friends to forego further reticence. I had felt that they were in possession of information I did not have, but I realized also that both were reluctant to speak. Sight of Cramton, however, had an ominously depressing effect on both of my companions, though it was not until I had signed the certificate and left the undertaker's shop that they broke their silence.

"I'm afraid that somehow we've got into something too dangerous to drop," said Hemery. "It isn't only Geoffrey who's in danger—there's not much to be done for him. I may as well tell you, Dr. Currie, if Geoffrey hadn't had hold of that star-stone, he'd have been found like that fellow back there."

"Go on," I said quietly. "I'm beginning to see that I was right in suspecting that this thing had its origin in your 'dark doings' at Oxford."

Neither denied it. Vernon admitted that their expulsion had been on justifiable grounds.

And what were the "doings?"

Old magic, sorcery—worse than that. They had practised it, not really seriously, of course. But being sent down had put a more uncompromising aspect on the affair.

"But what exactly did you do?" I asked.

Vernon took up the story. "The whole business had an accidental beginning. Geoff shouldn't have gone in search of the stone alone. Perhaps it was because of our group he believed least; if he'd had more faith, he'd have known what he was likely to find if he tried to get at the secret of the star-stone.

"It was by accident that we stumbled on a strange chapter of occult lore that would have been much better hidden. We were students of occult literature, and we had often come upon curious hints and suggestions of unnamable horrors—not precisely the kind of thing you run across in Black Mass jargon—and there were always strange names allied to such hints, and references to the Older Gods, the Ancient Ones, and certain others purporting to be mad genii of evil who inhabited outer space before the world was born, and who descended to ravage Earth and were vanquished by the Elder Gods and banished to various parts of the cosmos—one of them to the bottom of the sea, where its accursed spawn is reputed to live deep in caverns in a lost sea kingdom variously called R'lyeh or Ryah or Ryche.

"Of course, these references had no meaning for us; they were tantalizing, certainly, with their very real suggestions of outer horrors, and in their curious parallelism to similar legends in the ancient lore of primitive peoples in all parts of the globe. But at length Hemery stumbled on a set of books that told us things hidden for centuries—one by a reputedly mad Arab, another by a German doctor, and finally the *Confessions of Clithanus,* a monk who was likewise supposed somewhat deranged. At the same time another of us found disturbing parallels in the fiction of certain British and American writers, suggesting that they, too, were aware of this strange mythology.

"Clithanus made direct mention of Hydestall—that is, the old cathedral—and told a story of Augustine—yes, the St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, who visited Hydestall, where Clithanus was. Clithanus had found on the seacoast the five-pointed stone, emblem of the power of the Elder Gods, and feared by the Ancient Ones and their minions. There are in the *Confessions* disquieting hints of sea passages, unmentionable chambers and horrors beneath the sea off the coast from Hydestall, and an opening on the coast somewhere along here."

"Then it's possible," I put in, "that the 'passages' in which those three boys who were lost yesterday are the same ones the monk had reference to?"

Hemery nodded, and went on with the story Vernon had begun. "Clithanus writes of furtive treks down into the passages, and of faint horribly suggestive sounds from far below the surface of the sea. The displacement or re-

moval of the stone Clithanus found seems to have left an opening for something out of the depths, away from a lost sea kingdom—or some place, let us just say, in the sea. At that point, Clithanus became frightened and took his fright to Augustine. It was the bishop who caused the thing, by the power of the five-pointed star-stone, to be imprisoned in a stone casket far beneath the cellars of the priory near the cathedral. In an old letter, Augustine writes that the monk was mad, that he, Augustine, had banished him to Rome, and it is true that the *Confessions* were originally published in Rome. But of the thing that came, Augustine says nothing save for one cryptic line written to his Pope: 'Something from out there returned to these shores, and I have attended to it.' There is nothing more."

I drew the inference that the young men intended I should.

"Then you think that something like the 'thing' mentioned by Clithanus and Augustine, killed Cramton, frightened Geoffrey Malvern, and was seen by the three boys lost in the passages?"

Both nodded without hesitation.

"There are strange stories in certain of those old books—of the need these evil beings have of the life force drawn from human beings, the need for sacrifice of at least three living men to gain sufficient power to enable them to resume once again their former nefarious activities. One man hereabouts is dead—so far there would not seem to have been more. The old legends all describe the victims as icy, frozen, and crushed, as Cramton was found. I'm afraid, Doctor, that the thing is even now lurking about the priory in search of other victims. Cramton vanished on the night Geoff unwittingly liberated it by removing the stone. It is left for us to send this thing back, if we can, back to the sunken kingdom from which it came."

"And the sooner we reach the priory, the better," added Vernon.

"Yes, it's dusky now; the thing isn't likely to walk by light—not yet. We shall need to take the stone."

I had listened to this fantastic tale with the medical man's known skepticism. But there was a quiet persuasiveness about both Vernon and Hemery which carried its own conviction. Moreover, it could not be gainsaid that, had they intended a hoax, either could have concocted a far more credible tale. Their story, in fact, was so preposterous as to just possibly be true, and it did fit such facts as were available to any disinterested observer. Even if

but part of their tale were true, there was certainly something lethal at the priory, and some attempt must be made to get at it.

A faint, silvery sickle of moon shone low in the afterglow when the three of us emerged from the house. I carried the star-stone in my own pocket, one hand closed over its rough outlines, the inscription pressed against my palm. The evening was quiet, save for a faint wind off the sea. Apart from a casual remark about the mildness of the evening by Hemery, and my own reply, there was no conversation.

We walked to the outskirts of Lynwold, and were just about to short-cut across fields, when I saw a figure running down the road toward us. I recognized him as Jasper Wayne, a retired farmer who lived near the priory.

Wayne came on at a recklessly headlong speed, shouting and crying out to us, for he had seen us also. He came up presently to where we waited, but it took a few moments before he had calmed down sufficiently to speak coherently, and then the story he told was garbled. But it was no less alarming, for it supplemented damnably the tale I had listened to so dubiously only a short time ago.

Wayne had been outside just at sundown, sweeping the countryside through a pair of field-glasses. Happening to look toward the priory, his eye was caught by a shadowy movement. He had fixed his glasses on the ruins, just as his man, Herbert Green, who had been coming down the coast road with the horses, approached the priory. As Green came abreast of the ruins, the shadow reappeared, took on substance, and seemed to roll awkwardly with some speed toward the road. The horses leaped forward, but not quickly enough to prevent the shadowy thing from throwing itself upon Green. For a few moments Green had been obscured, the horses dragging both him and the attacking shadow along the road in a cloud of dust. Then the thing rolled away, vanishing once again in the darkness shrouding the ruins. The horses had dragged Green to the farm, but Green was oddly dead—icy cold, crushed horribly.

"Where is he?" I asked.

"Over on the verandah at my place, covered with a blanket. The horses got away, and I was just coming in for you—but he's dead, he don't need a doctor."

"We'll go on," I said. "You keep on to Lynwold for the undertaker. If we're not at your place when you get back, we'll have gone on to the priory."

Wayne started away again through the deepening twilight.

"That makes two," said Hemery quietly, but his voice betrayed that he was deeply upset.

We found Herbert Green's body at the farmhouse of Jasper Wayne. The marks showing where the body had been dragged away from the traces of the horses were still in evidence. I drew back the blanket—and from that examination I turned away in badly shaken state, reflected in my companions. For Green's was an exact repetition of Cramton's death—the same iciness, the same rigidity, the same crushed pulp. One such case had been enough to disturb me; a second was more than enough to fill me with terror and horror—not only because of what had happened, but because of what might yet take place in the light of the story Hemery and Vernon had told.

Yet it was certain that if any solution were to be found, it lay within our power to seek and find it. There was nothing to be gained here at the mutilated body of the second victim to fall to the thing at the priory; there was everything to be gained by proceeding without further delay to the priory itself and prevent, if possible, any further outrage.

The shadows were deepening around the ruins as we approached the priory. There was neither sound nor movement among the ruins. For what, after all, were we searching? What manner of thing? I put my question in a whisper to Vernon.

"I've no more idea than you," he replied. "Something horrible beyond description, or else it would never have driven Geoff mad. But if the thing's here, it will feel the power emanating from the stone."

We waited in motionless silence. The night's voices had diminished to the sound of the resurgent waves of the nearby sea and the faraway cries of a skycoasting nightjar. For a long few minutes the scene held. Then there rose a new sound, fraught with suggestive terror, a lumbering, scraping sound, accompanied by a terrible slavering. The sounds came from below the level at which we sat, from that level where, presumably, the legendary stone casket had been hidden.

"Thank God we have the stone!" murmured Vernon.

Abruptly an indescribable shape rose up among the ruins, giving forth a low ululation that seemed to roll up from deep within its misshapen hulk. It hesitated for but a moment, then rolled clumsily out into the lowland surrounding the ruins. There it gathered speed as it moved forward.

"Give me the stone," asked Vernon.

I surrendered it without hesitation.

Vernon shouted and ran toward the thing, Hemery and myself close behind him. But the entity from the ruins had apparently not seen us; it moved steadily toward the cathedral at a speed which forced us to exert ourselves to the utmost to keep up with it. Even so, it vanished into the ruined church before we could catch up to it. Once at the cathedral's roofless walls, Vernon called a halt. It would not do for us to separate, he warned, lest the thing caught Hemery and myself alone, and increased its own power by killing one of us separated from the strength of the stone, which might then be powerless against it.

Accordingly the three of us entered the shadowed corridors of the cathedral together in search of our quarry. We crept silently through the ruins and back again, and then, becoming bolder, went forward with less care. But the thing was not in evidence. It had altered its course somewhere. Could it have doubled back to Wayne's house? I wondered apprehensively. After half an hour, my companions were despondent and spoke of returning either to the ruins of the priory or to Lynwold.

It was then that a shocking, greenish hulk rose from the floor of the corridor before us and came directly toward us. At once Vernon faced it with the stone. The thing paused—but only for a moment; then a tentacle lashed forth and struck at Hemery. But Vernon sprang forward, bearing the stone as a sheath, and the thing in the corridor fell back, whistling weirdly. Out of the darkness before us shone a trio of cruel, malignant eyes, and the opening which served as its mouth gaped yawningly below. At the same moment, its body began to glow with an eerie sea-green light. Then once more the thing came at us.

What happened after that remains like a nightmare of mad and fantastic images in my memory. The battle with the monster from outside seemed endless, but eventually it lumbered awkwardly away from Hydestall Cathe-

dral and made for the priory. There it fought anew, fought a long time before it vanished into the depths of an underground passage.

I suppose that at the end we were no longer human in our battle with the inhuman monster, fighting it back inch by inch, forcing its retreat until at last it crouched in hiding in the very casket from which it had been liberated when Geoffrey Malvern—as we learned later—had so ill-advisedly pried the star-stone off the lid. How long the battle lasted I could not say, but it was dawn when the three of us returned from the seacoast, exhausted. The casket, sealed once more by the stone, lay in the ocean's depths, and already the events of the night seemed like a tenuous and incredible nightmare, as unreal as the amorphous being which had so briefly returned to its ancient life in the priory ruins.

But as to whence it came, in truth, no one could tell. Nor could anyone say by what laws it had existed for so many centuries, to fatten and grow again in a time far beyond its own, to bring its horror into a distant future. And what if sometime in years to come another searcher takes up the stone once more and looses the thing from outside anew? Who knows? In other corners of this earth there may be others biding their time.

THE MASK OF CTHULHU

ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION
TO THE MASK OF CTHULHU

THE RETURN OF HASTUR

THE WHIPPOORWILLS IN THE HILLS

SOMETHING IN WOOD

THE SANDWIN COMPACT

THE HOUSE IN THE VALLEY

THE SEAL OF R'LYEH

ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION TO THE MASK OF CTHULHU

THE NARRATIVES IN this book are, manifestly, on Lovecraftian themes. Indeed, one of them—*The Return of Hastur*—was begun before the death of H. P. Lovecraft, who saw its opening pages and the outline of my proposed development, and in consequence made several suggestions which were enthusiastically incorporated into the story. The remaining stories also stem directly from the Cthulhu Mythos created by Lovecraft, who was in the habit of urging his writer friends to add to and expand the Mythos.

These tales were written over a period of roughly two decades, beginning with *The Return of Hastur* in 1936, and ending with *The Seal of R'lyeh,* which was conceived and written in Los Angeles in the summer of 1953. While all the stories owe their existence to the myth-pattern created by Lovecraft, one, *The House in the Valley,* had its inception in a sketch of the setting taken from an actual scene by the well-known artist-cartoonist Richard Taylor.

The stories in these pages represent, as it were, a postscript in tribute to the creative imagination of the late H. P. Lovecraft.

—AUGUST DERLETH



ACTUALLY, IT BEGAN a long time ago: how long, I have not dared to guess: but so far as is concerned my own connection with the case that has ruined my practice and earned me the dubiety of the medical profession in regard to my sanity, it began with Amos Tuttle's death. That was on a night in late winter, with a south wind blowing on the edge of spring. I had been in ancient, legend-haunted Arkham that day; he had learned of my presence there from Doctor Ephraim Sprague, who attended him, and had the doctor call the Lewiston House and bring me to that gloomy estate on the Aylesbury Road near the Innsmouth Turnpike. It was not a place to which I liked to go, but the old man had paid me well to tolerate his sullenness and eccentricity, and Sprague had made it clear that he was dying: a matter of hours.

And he was. He had hardly the strength to motion Sprague from the room and talk to me, though his voice came clearly enough and with little effort.

"You know my will," he said. "Stand by it to the letter."

That will had been a bone of contention between us because of its provision that before his heir and sole surviving nephew, Paul Tuttle, could claim his estate, the house would have to be destroyed—not taken down, but

destroyed, together with certain books designated by shelf number in his final instructions. His death-bed was no place to debate this wanton destruction anew; I nodded, and he accepted that. Would to heaven I had obeyed without question!

"Now then," he went on, "there's a book downstairs you must take back to the library of Miskatonic University."

He gave me the title. At that time it meant little to me; but it has since come to mean more than I can say—symbol of age-old horror, of maddening things beyond the thin veil of prosaic daily life—the Latin translation of the abhorred *Necronomicon* by the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred.

I found the book easily enough. For the last two decades of his life Amos Tuttle had lived in increasing seclusion among books collected from all parts of the world: old, worm-eaten texts, with titles that might have frightened away a less hardened man—the sinister *De Vermis Mysteriis* of Ludvig Prinn, Comte d'Erlette's terrible *Cultes des Goules,* Von Junzt's damnable *Unaussprechlichen Kulten.* I did not then know how rare these were, nor did I understand the priceless rarity of certain fragmentary pieces: the frightful *Book of Eibon,* the horror-fraught Pnakotic Manuscripts, and the dread *R'lyeh Text;* for these, I found upon an examination of Amos Tuttle's accounts after his death, he had paid a fabulous sum. But nowhere did I find so high a figure as that he had paid for the *R'lyeh Text,* which had come to him from somewhere in the dark interior of Asia; according to his files, he had paid for it no less than one hundred thousand dollars; but in addition to this, there was present in his account in regard to this yellowed manuscript a notation which puzzled me at the time, but which I was to have ominous cause to remember—after the sum above mentioned, Amos Tuttle had written in his spidery hand: *in addition to the promise.*

These facts did not come out until Paul Tuttle was in possession, but before that, several strange occurrences took place, things that should have aroused my suspicion in regard to the countryside legends of some powerful supernatural influence clinging to the old house. The first of these was of small consequence in view of the others; it was simply that upon returning the *Necronomicon* to the library of Miskatonic University at Arkham, I found myself conveyed by a tight-lipped librarian straightaway to the office of the director, Doctor Llanfer, who asked me bluntly to account for the book's being in my hands. I had no hesitation in doing so, and thereby dis-

covered that the rare volume was never permitted out of the library; that, in fact, Amos Tuttle had abstracted it on one of his rare visits, having failed in his attempts to persuade Doctor Llanfer to permit his borrowing it. And Amos had been clever enough to prepare in advance a marvellously good imitation of the book, with a binding almost flawless in its resemblance, and the actual reproduction of title and opening pages of the text reproduced from his memory; upon the occasion of his handling the mad Arab's book, he had substituted his dummy for the original and gone off with one of the two copies of this shunned work available on the North American continent, one of the five copies known to be in existence in the world.

The second of these things was a little more startling, though it bears the trappings of conventional haunted house stories. Both Paul Tuttle and I heard at odd times in the house at night, while his uncle's corpse lay there particularly, the sound of padding footsteps, but there was this strangeness about them: they were not like footsteps falling within the house at all, but like the steps of some creature in size almost beyond the conception of man walking at a great distance *underground*, so that the sound actually *vibrated* into the house from the depths of earth below. And when I have reference to steps, it is only for lack of a better word to describe the sounds, for they were not flat steps at all, but a kind of spongy, jelly-like, sloshing sound made with the force of so much weight behind them that the consequent shuddering of earth in that place was communicated to us in the way we heard it. There was nothing more than this, and presently it was gone, ceasing, coincidentally enough, in the hours of that dawn when Amos Tuttle's corpse was borne away forty-eight hours sooner than we had planned. The sounds we dismissed as settlings of the earth along the distant coast, not alone, because we did not attach too great an importance to them, but because of the final thing that took place before Paul Tuttle officially took possession of the old house on the Aylesbury Road.

This last thing was the most shocking of all, and of the three who knew it, only I now remain alive, Doctor Sprague being dead this day one month, though he took only one look and said, "Bury him at once!" And so we did, for the change in Amos Tuttle's body was ghastly beyond conception, and especially horrible in its suggestion, and it was so because the body was *not* falling into any visible decay, but changing subtly in another way, becoming suffused with a weird iridescence, which darkened presently until it was al-

most ebon, and the appearance of the flesh of his puffy hands and face of minute, scale-like growth. There was likewise some change about the shape of his head; it seemed to lengthen, to take on a curious kind of fish-like look, accompanied by a faint exudation of thick fish smell from the coffin; and that these changes were not purely imaginative was shockingly substantiated when the body was subsequently found in the place where malignant after-dwellers had conveyed it, and there, at last falling into putrefaction though it was, others saw with me the terrible, suggestive changes that had taken place, though they had mercifully no knowledge of what had gone before. But at the time when Amos Tuttle lay in the old house, there was no hint of what was to come; we were quick to close the coffin and quicker still to take it to the ivy-covered Tuttle vault in Arkham cemetery.

Paul Tuttle was at that time in his late forties, but, like so many men of his generation, he had the face and figure of a youth in his twenties. Indeed, the only hint of his age lay in the faint traces of grey in the hair of his moustache and temples. He was a tall, dark-haired man, slightly overweight, with frank blue eyes which years of scholarly research had not reduced to the necessity of glasses. Nor was he ignorant of law, for he quickly made known that if I, as his uncle's executor, were not disposed to overlook the clause in his will that called for the destruction of the house on the Aylesbury Road, he would contest the will on the justifiable ground of Amos Tuttle's insanity. I pointed out to him that he stood alone against Doctor Sprague and me, but I was at the same time not blind to the fact that the unreasonableness of the request might very well defeat us; besides, I myself considered the clause in this regard amazingly wanton in the destruction it demanded, and was not prepared to fight a contest because of so minor a matter. Yet, could I have foreseen what was to come, could I have dreamed of the horror to follow, I would have carried out Amos Tuttle's last request regardless of any decision of the court. However, such foresight was not mine.

We went to see Judge Wilton, Tuttle and I, and put the matter before him. He agreed with us that the destruction of the house seemed needless, and more than once hinted at concurrence with Paul Tuttle's belief in his late uncle's madness.

"The old man's been touched for as long as I knew him," he said dryly. "And as for you, Haddon, can you get up on a stand and swear that he was absolutely sane?"

Remembering with a certain uneasiness the theft of the *Necronomicon* from Miskatonic University, I had to confess that I could not.

So Paul Tuttle took possession of the estate on the Aylesbury Road, and I went back to my legal practice in Boston, not dissatisfied with the way things had gone, and yet not without a lurking uneasiness difficult to define, an insidious feeling of impending tragedy, no little fed by my memory of what we had seen in Amos Tuttle's coffin before we sealed and locked it away in the centuries-old vault in Arkham cemetery.

2

IT WAS NOT FOR some time that I saw the gambrel roofs and Georgian balustrades of witch-cursed Arkham again, and then was there on business for a client who wished me to see to it that his property in ancient Innsmouth was protected from the Government agents and police who had taken possession of the shunned and haunted town though it was now some months since the mysterious dynamiting of blocks of the waterfront buildings and part of the terror-hung Devil Reef in the sea beyond—a mystery which has been carefully guarded and hidden since then, though I have learned of a paper purporting to give the true facts of the Innsmouth horror, a privately published manuscript written by a Providence author. It was impossible at that time to proceed to Innsmouth because Secret Service men had closed all roads; however, I made representations to the proper person and received an assurance that my client's property would be fully protected, since it lay well back from the waterfront; so I proceeded about other small matters in Arkham.

I went to luncheon that day in a small restaurant near Miskatonic University, and while there, heard myself accosted in a familiar voice. I looked up and saw Doctor Llanfer, the university library's director. He seemed somewhat upset, and betrayed his concern clearly in his features. I invited him to join me, but he declined; he did, however, sit down, somewhat on the chair's edge.

"Have you been out to see Paul Tuttle?" he asked abruptly.

"I thought of going this afternoon," I replied. "Is anything wrong?"

He flushed a little guiltily. "That I can't say," he answered precisely. "But there have been some nasty rumours loose in Arkham. And the *Necronomicon* is gone again."

"Good Heaven! you're surely not accusing Paul Tuttle of having taken it?" I exclaimed, half in surprise, half amused. "I could not imagine of what use it might be to him."

"Still—he has it," Doctor Llanfer persisted. "But I don't think he stole it, and should not like to be understood as saying so. It is my opinion that one of our clerks gave it to him and is now reluctant to confess the enormity of his error. Be that as it may, the book has not come back, and I fear we shall have to go after it."

"I could ask him about it," I said.

"If you would, thank you," responded Doctor Llanfer, a little eagerly. "I take it you've heard nothing of the rumours that are rife here?"

I shook my head.

"Very likely they are only the outgrowth of some imaginative mind," he continued, but the air of him suggested that he was not willing or able to accept so prosaic an explanation. "It appears that passengers along the Aylesbury Road have heard strange sounds late at night, all apparently emanating from the Tuttle house."

"What sounds?" I asked, not without immediate apprehension.

"Apparently those of footsteps; and yet, I understand no one will definitely say so, save for one young man who characterized them as *soggy* and said that they sounded as if *something big were walking in mud and water nearby.*"

The strange sounds Paul Tuttle and I had heard on the night following Amos Tuttle's death had passed from my mind, but at this mention of footsteps by Doctor Llanfer, the memory of what I had heard returned in full. I fear I gave myself slightly away, for Doctor Llanfer observed my sudden interest; fortunately, he chose to interpret it as evidence that I had indeed heard something of these rumours, my statement to the contrary notwithstanding. I did not choose to correct him in this regard, and at the same time I experienced a sudden desire to hear no more; so I did not press him for further details, and presently he rose to return to his duties, and left me with my promise to ask Paul Tuttle for the missing book still sounding in my ears.

His story, however slight it was, nevertheless sounded within me a note of alarm; I could not help recalling the numerous small things that held to memory—the steps we had heard, the odd clause in Amos Tuttle's will, the awful metamorphosis in Amos Tuttle's corpse. There was already then a

faint suspicion in my mind that some sinister chain of events was becoming manifest here; my natural curiosity rose, though not without a certain feeling of distaste, a conscious desire to withdraw, and the recurrence of that strange, insidious conviction of impending tragedy. But I determined to see Paul Tuttle as early as possible.

My work in Arkham consumed the afternoon, and it was not until dusk that I found myself standing before the massive oaken door of the old Tuttle house on Aylesbury Road. My rather peremptory knock was answered by Paul himself, who stood, lamp held high in hand, peering out into the growing night.

"Haddon!" he exclaimed, throwing the door wider. "Come in!"

That he was genuinely glad to see me I could not doubt, for the note of enthusiasm in his voice precluded any other supposition. The heartiness of his welcome also served to confirm me in my intention not to speak of the rumours I had heard and to proceed about an inquiry after the *Necronomicon* at my own good time. I remembered that just prior to his uncle's death, Tuttle had been working on a philological treatise relating to the growth of the Sac Indian language, and determined to inquire about this paper as if nothing else were of moment.

"You've had supper, I suppose," said Tuttle, leading me down the hall and into the library.

I said that I had eaten in Arkham.

He put the lamp down upon a book-laden table, pushing some papers to one side as he did so. Inviting me to sit down, he resumed the seat he had evidently left to answer my knock.

I saw now that he was somewhat dishevelled, and that he had permitted his beard to grow. He had also taken on more weight, doubtless as a consequence of strictly enforced scholarship, with all its attendant confinement to the house and lack of physical exercise.

"How fares the Sac treatise?" I asked.

"I've put that aside," he said shortly. "I may take it up later. For the present, I've struck something far more important—just how important I cannot yet say."

I saw now that the books on the table were not the usual scholarly tomes I had seen on his Ipswich desk, but with some faint apprehension observed that they were the books condemned by the explicit instructions of Tuttle's

uncle, as a glance at the vacant spaces on the proscribed shelves clearly corroborated.

Tuttle turned to me almost eagerly and lowered his voice as if in fear of being overheard. "As a matter of fact, Haddon, it's colossal—a gigantic feat of the imagination; only for this: I'm no longer certain that it *is* imaginative, indeed, I'm not. I wondered about that clause in my uncle's will; I couldn't understand why he should want this house destroyed, and rightly surmised that the reason must lie somewhere in the pages of those books he so carefully condemned." He waved a hand at the incunabula before him. "So I examined them, and I can tell you I have discovered things of such incredible strangeness, such bizarre horror, that I hesitate sometimes to dig deeper into the mystery. Frankly, Haddon, it is the most outré matter I've ever come upon, and I must say it involved considerable research, quite apart from these books Uncle Amos collected."

"Indeed," I said dryly. "And I dare say you've had to do considerable travelling?"

He shook his head. "None at all, apart from one trip to Miskatonic University Library. The fact is, I found I could be served just as well by mail. You'll remember those papers of uncle's? Well, I discovered among them that Uncle Amos paid a hundred thousand for a certain bound manuscript—bound in human skin, incidentally—together with a cryptic line: *in addition to the promise.* I began to ask myself what promise Uncle Amos could have made, and to whom; whether to the man or woman who had sold him this *R'lyeh Text* or to some other. I proceeded forthwith to search out the name of the man who had sold him the book, and presently found it with his address (some Chinese priest from inner Tibet) and wrote to him. His reply reached me a week ago."

He bent away and rummaged briefly among the papers on his desk, until he found what he sought and handed it to me.

"I wrote in my uncle's name not trusting entirely in the transaction, and wrote, moreover, as if I had forgotten or had a hope to avoid the promise," he continued. "His reply is fully as cryptic as my uncle's notation."

Indeed, it was so, for the crumpled paper that was handed to me bore, in a strange, stilted script, but one line, without signature or date: *To afford a haven for Him Who Is Not To Be Named.*

I dare say I looked up at Tuttle with my wonderment clearly mirrored in my eyes, for he smiled before he replied.

"Means nothing to you, eh? No more did it to me, when first I saw it. But not for long. In order to understand what follows, you should know at least a brief outline of the mythology—if indeed it *is* only mythology—in which this mystery is rooted. My Uncle Amos apparently knew and believed all about it, for the various notes scattered in the margins of his proscribed books bespeak a knowledge far beyond mine. Apparently the mythology springs from a common source with our own legendary Genesis, but only by a very thin resemblance; sometimes I am tempted to say that this mythology is far older than any other—certainly in its implications it goes far beyond, being cosmic and ageless, for its beings are of two natures, and two only: the Old or Ancient Ones, the Elder Gods, of *cosmic good,* and those of *cosmic evil,* bearing many names, and themselves of different groups, as if associated with the elements and yet transcending them: for there are the Water Beings, hidden in the depths; those of Air that are the primal lurkers beyond time; those of Earth, horrible animate survivals of distant eons. Incredible time ago, the Old Ones banished from the cosmic places all the Evil Ones, imprisoning them in many places; but in time these Evil Ones spawned hellish minions who set about preparing for their return to greatness. The Old Ones are nameless, but their power is and will apparently always be great enough to check that of the others.

"Now, among the Evil Ones there is apparently often conflict, as among lesser beings. The Water Beings oppose those of Air; the Fire Beings oppose Earth Beings, but nevertheless, they together hate and fear the Elder Gods and hope always to defeat them in some future time. Among my Uncle Amos's papers there are many fearsome names written in his crabbed script: *Great Cthulhu, the Lake of Hali, Tsathoggua, Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Azathoth, Hastur the Unspeakable, Yuggoth, Aldones, Thale, Aldebaran, the Hyades, Carcosa,* and others: and it is possible to divide some of those names into vaguely suggestive classes from those notes which are explicable to me—though many present insoluble mysteries I cannot hope as yet to penetrate; and many, too, are written in a language I do not know, together with cryptic and oddly frightening symbols and signs. But through what I have learned, it is possible to know that Great Cthulhu is one of the Water Beings, even as Hastur is of

the Beings that stalk the star-spaces; and it is possible to gather from vague hints in these forbidden books where some of these beings are. So I can believe that in this mythology, Great Cthulhu was banished to a place beneath the seas of Earth, while Hastur was hurled into outer space, into that *place where the black stars hang,* which is indicated as Aldebaran of the Hyades, which is the place mentioned by Chambers, even as repeats the *Carcosa* of Bierce.

"Coming upon this communication from the priest in Tibet in the light of these things, surely one fact must come clearly forth: Haddon, surely, beyond the shadow of doubt, Him Who Is Not To Be Named can be none other than Hastur the Unspeakable!"

The sudden cessation of his voice startled me; there was something hypnotic about his eager whisper, and something too that filled me with a conviction far beyond the power of Paul Tuttle's words. Somewhere, deep within the recesses of my mind, a chord had been struck, a mnemonic connection I could not dismiss or trace and which left me with a feeling as of limitless age, a cosmic bridge into another place and time.

"That seems logical," I said at last, cautiously.

"Logical! Haddon, it *is;* it must be!" he exclaimed.

"Granting it," I said, "what then?"

"Why, granting it," he went on quickly, "we have conceded that my Uncle Amos promised to make ready a haven in preparation for the return of Hastur from whatever region of outer space now imprisons him. Where that haven is, or what manner of place it may be, has not thus far been my concern, though I can guess, perhaps. This is not the time for guessing, and yet it would seem, from certain other evidence at hand, that there may be some permissible deductions made. The first and most important of these is of a double nature—ergo, something unforeseen prevented the return of Hastur within my uncle's lifetime, and yet some other being has made itself manifest." Here he looked at me with unusual frankness and not a little nervousness. "As for the evidence of this manifestation, I would rather not at this time go into it. Suffice it to say that I believe I have such evidence at hand. I return to my original premise, then.

"Among the few marginal notations made by my uncle, there are two or three especially remarkable ones in the *R'lyeh Text;* indeed, in the light of what is known or can justifiably be guessed, they are sinister and ominous notes."

So speaking, he opened the ancient manuscript and turned to a place quite close to the beginning of the narrative.

"Now attend me, Haddon," he said, and I rose and bent over him to look at the spidery, almost illegible script that I knew for Amos Tuttle's. "Observe the underscored line of text: *Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wagah' nagl fhtagn,* and what follows it in my uncle's unmistakable hand: *His minions preparing the way, and he no longer dreaming? (WT: 2/28)* and at a more recent date, to judge by the shakiness of his hand, the single abbreviation: *Inns!* Obviously, this means nothing without a translation of the text. Failing this at the moment I first saw this note, I turned my attention to the parenthetical notation, and within a short while solved its meaning as a reference to a popular magazine, *Weird Tales,* for February, 1928. I have it here."

He opened the magazine against the meaningless text, partially concealing the lines which had begun to take on an uncanny atmosphere of eldritch age beneath my eyes, and there beneath Paul Tuttle's hand lay the first page of a story so obviously belonging to this unbelievable mythology that I could not repress a start of astonishment. The title, only partly covered by his hand, was *The Call of Cthulhu,* by H. P. Lovecraft. But Tuttle did not linger over the first page; he turned well into the heart of the story before he paused and presented to my gaze the identical unreadable line that lay beside the crabbed script of Amos Tuttle in the incredibly rare *R'lyeh Text* upon which the magazine reposed. And there, only a paragraph below, appeared what purported to be a translation of the utterly unknown language of the *Text: In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.*

"There you have it," resumed Tuttle with some satisfaction. "Cthulhu, too, waited for the time of his resurgence—how many eons, no one may know; but my uncle has questioned whether Cthulhu still lies dreaming, and following this, has written and doubly underscored an abbreviation which can only stand for *Innsmouth!* This, together with the ghastly things half hinted in this revealing story purporting to be only *fiction,* opens up a vista of undreamed horror, of age-old evil."

"Good Heaven!" I exclaimed involuntarily. "Surely you can't think this fantasy has come to life?"

Tuttle turned and gave me a strangely distant look. "What *I* think doesn't matter, Haddon," he replied gravely. "But there is one thing I would like very much to know—what happened at *Innsmouth?* What has happened

there for decades past that people have shunned it so? Why has this once prosperous port sunk into oblivion, half its houses empty, its property practically worthless? And why was it necessary for Government men to blow up row after row of the waterfront dwellings and warehouses? Lastly, for what earthly reason did they send a submarine to torpedo the marine spaces beyond Devil Reef just out of Innsmouth?"

"I know nothing of that," I replied.

But he paid no heed; his voice rose a little, uncertain and trembling, and he said, "I can tell you, Haddon. It is even as my Uncle Amos has written: Great Cthulhu has risen again!"

For a moment I was shaken; then I said, "But it is Hastur for whom he waited."

"Precisely," agreed Tuttle in a clipped professorial voice. "Then I should like to know who or what it is that walks in the earth in the dark hours when Fomalhaut has risen and the Hyades are in the east!"

3

WITH THIS, HE ABRUPTLY changed the subject; he began to ask me questions about myself and my practice, and presently, when I rose to go, he asked me to stay the night. This I consented finally, and with some reluctance, to do, whereupon he departed at once to make a room ready for me. I took the opportunity thus afforded to examine his desk more closely for the *Necronomicon* missing from the library of Miskatonic University. It was not on his desk, but, crossing to the shelves, I found it there. I had just taken it down and was examining it to make certain of its identity, when Tuttle reentered the room. His quick eyes darted to the book in my hands, and he half smiled.

"I wish you'd take that back to Doctor Llanfer when you go in the morning, Haddon," he said casually. "Now that I've copied the text, I have no further use for it."

"I'll do that gladly," I said, relieved that the matter could so easily be settled.

Shortly after, I retired to the room on the second floor which he had prepared for me. He accompanied me as far as the door, and there paused briefly, uncertain of speech ready for his tongue and yet not permitted to

pass his lips; for he turned once or twice, bade me good night before he spoke what weighed upon his thoughts: "By the way—if you hear anything in the night, don't be alarmed, Haddon. Whatever it is, it's harmless—as yet."

It was not until he had gone and I was alone in my room that the significance of what he had said and the way he had said it dawned upon me. It grew upon me then that this was confirmation of the wild rumours that had penetrated Arkham, and that Tuttle spoke not entirely without fear. I undressed slowly and thoughtfully, and got into the pyjamas Tuttle had laid out for me, without deviating for an instant from the preoccupation with the weird mythology of Amos Tuttle's ancient books that held my mind. Never quick to pass judgement, I was not prone to do so now; despite the apparent absurdity of the structure, it was still sufficiently well erected to merit more than a casual scrutiny. And it was clear to me that Tuttle was more than half convinced of its truth. This in itself was more than enough to give me pause, for Paul Tuttle had distinguished himself time and again for the thoroughness of his researches, and his published papers had not been challenged for even their most minor detail. As a result of facing these facts, I was prepared to admit at least that there was some basis for the mythology-structure outlined to me by Tuttle, but as to its truth or error, of course I was in no position at that time to commit myself even within the confines of my own mind; for once a man concedes or condemns a thing within his mind, it is doubly, nay triply, difficult to rid himself of his conclusion, however ill-advised it may subsequently prove to be.

Thinking thus, I got into bed, and lay there awaiting sleep. The night had deepened and darkened, though I could see through the flimsy curtain at the window that the stars were out, Andromeda high in the east, and the constellations of autumn beginning to mount the sky.

I was on the edge of sleep when I was startled awake again by a sound which had been present for some time, but which had only just then been borne in upon me with all its significance: the faintly trembling step of some gigantic creature vibrating all through the house, though the sound of it came not from within the house, but from the east, and for a confused moment I thought of something risen from the sea and walking along the shore in the wet sand.

But this illusion passed when I raised myself on one elbow and listened

more intently. For a moment there was no sound whatever, then it came again, irregularly, broken—a step, a pause, two steps in fairly quick succession, an odd *sucking* noise. Disturbed, I got up and went to the open window. The night was warm, and the still air almost sultry; far to the north-east a beacon cut an arc upon the sky, and from the distant north came the faint drone of a night plane. It was already past midnight; low in the east shone red Aldebaran and the Pleiades, but I did not at that time, as I did later, connect the disturbances I heard to the appearance of the Hyades above the horizon.

The odd sounds, meanwhile, continued unabated, and it was borne in upon me presently that they were indeed approaching the house, however slow their progress. And that they came from the direction of the sea I could not doubt, for in this place there were no configurations of earth that might have thrown any sound out of directional focus. I began to think again of those similar sounds we had heard while Amos Tuttle's body lay in the house, though I did not then remember that even as the Hyades lay now low in the east, so they were then setting in the west. If there were any difference in the manner of their approach, I was not able to ascertain it, unless it was that the present disturbance seemed somehow *closer,* but it was not a physical closeness as much as a psychic *closeness.* The conviction of this was so strong that I began to feel a growing uneasiness not untinged with fear; I began to experience a wild restlessness, a desire for company; and I went quickly to the door of my room, opened it, and stepped quietly into the hall in search of my host.

But now at once a new discovery made itself known. As long as I had been in my room, the sounds I had heard seemed unquestionably to come from the east, notwithstanding the faint, almost intangible tremors that seemed to shudder through the old house; but here in the darkness of the hall whither I had gone without a light of any kind, I became aware that the sounds and tremblings alike emanated from *below*—not, indeed, from any place in the house, but below that—rising as if from subterranean places. My nervous tension increased, and I stood uneasily to get my bearings in the dark, when I perceived from the direction of the stairway a faint radiance mounting from below. I moved towards it at once, noiselessly, and looking over the banister, saw that the light came from an electric candle held in Paul Tuttle's hand. He was standing in the lower hall, clad in his dressing-gown,

though it was clear to me even from where I stood that he had not removed his clothes. The light that fell upon his face revealed the intensity of his attention; his head was cocked a little to one side in an attitude of listening, and he stood motionless the while I looked down upon him.

"Paul!" I called in a harsh whisper.

He looked up instantly and saw my face doubtless caught in the light from the candle in his hand. "Do you hear?" he asked.

"Yes—what in God's name is it?"

"I've heard it before," he said. "Come down."

I went down to the lower hall, where I stood for a moment under his penetrating and questioning gaze.

"You aren't afraid, Haddon?"

I shook my head.

"Then come with me."

He turned and led the way towards the back of the house, where he descended into the cellars below. All this time the sounds were rising in volume; it was as if they had approached closer to the house, indeed, almost as if they were directly below, and now there was obvious a definite trembling in the building, not alone of the walls and supports, but one with the shuddering and shaking of the earth all around: it was as if some deep subterranean disturbance had chosen this spot in the earth's surface to make itself manifest. But Tuttle was unmoved by this, doubtless for the reason that he had experienced it before. He went directly through the first and second cellars to a third, set somewhat lower than the others, and apparently of more recent construction, but, like the first two, built of limestone blocks set in cement.

In the centre of this sub-cellar he paused and stood quietly listening. The sounds had by this time risen to such intensity that it seemed as if the house were caught in a vortex of volcanic upheaval without actually suffering the destruction of its supports; for the trembling and shuddering, the creaking and groaning of the rafters above us gave evidence of the tremendous pressure exerted within the earth beneath us, and even the stone floor of the cellar seemed alive under my bare feet. But presently these sounds appeared to recede into the background, though actually they lessened not at all, and only presented this illusion because of our growing familiarity with them and because our ears were becoming attuned to other sounds in more

major keys, these, too, rising from below as from a great distance, but carrying with them an insidious hellishness in the implications that grew upon us.

For the first whistling sounds were not clear enough to justify any guess as to their origin, and it was not until I had been listening for some time that it occurred to me that the sounds breaking into the weird whistling or whimpering derived from something alive, some sentient being, for presently they resolved into uncouth and shocking mouthings, indistinct and not intelligible even when they could be clearly heard. By this time, Tuttle had put the candle down, had come to his knees, and now half lay upon the floor with his ear close to the stone.

In obedience to his motion, I did likewise, and found that the sounds from below resolved into more recognizable syllables, though no less meaningless. For the first while, I heard nothing but incoherent and apparently unconnected ululations, with which were interpolated chanting sounds, which later I put down as follows: *Iä! Iä! . . . Shub-Niggurath . . . Ugh! Cthulhu fhtagn! . . . Iä! Iä! Cthulhu!*

But that I was in some error in regard to at least one of these sounds, I soon learned. *Cthulhu* itself was plainly audible, despite the fury of mounting sound all around; but the word that followed now seemed somewhat longer than *fhtagn:* it was as if an extra syllable had been added, and yet I could not be certain that it had not been there all the while, for presently it came clearer, and Tuttle took from a pocket his notebook and pencil and wrote:

"They are saying *Cthulhu naflhtagn.*"

Judging by the expression of his eyes, faintly elated, this evidently conveyed something to him, but to me it meant nothing, apart from ability to recognize a portion of it as identical in character with the words that appeared in the abhorred *R'lyeh Text,* and subsequently again in the magazine story, where its translation would seem to have indicated that the words meant: *Cthulhu waits dreaming.* My obvious blank ignorance of his meaning apparently recalled to my host that his philological learning was far in excess of mine, for he smiled bleakly and whispered, "It can be nothing else but a negative construction."

Even then I did not at once understand that he meant to explain that the subterranean voices were not saying what I had thought, but: *Cthulhu no*

longer waits dreaming! There was now no longer any question of belief, for the things that were taking place were of no human origin, and admitted of no other solution than one in some way, however remotely, related to the incredible mythology Tuttle had so recently expounded to me. And now, as if this evidence of feeling and hearing were not enough, there became manifest a strange fetid smell mingled with a nauseatingly strong odour of fish, apparently seeping up through the porous limestone.

Tuttle became aware of this almost simultaneously with my own recognition, and I was alarmed to observe in his features traces of apprehension stronger than any I had heretofore noticed. He lay for a moment quietly; then he rose stealthily, took up the candle, and crept from the room, beckoning me after him.

Only when we were once more on the upper story did he venture to speak. "They are closer than I thought," he said then, musingly.

"Is it Hastur?" I asked nervously.

But he shook his head. "It cannot be he, because the passage below leads only to the sea and is doubtless partly full of water. Therefore it can only be one of the Water Beings—those who took refuge there when the torpedoes destroyed Devil Reef beyond shunned Innsmouth—Cthulhu, or those who serve him, as the Mi-Go serve in the icy fastnesses, and the Tcho-Tcho people serve on the hidden plateaux of Asia."

Since it was impossible to sleep, we sat for a time in the library, while Tuttle spoke in a half-chanting manner of the strange things he had come upon in the old books that had been his uncle's: sat waiting for the dawn while he told of the dreaded Plateau of Leng, of the Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young, of Azathoth and Nyarlathotep, the Mighty Messenger who walked the star-spaces in the semblance of man; of the horrible and diabolic Yellow Sign, the haunted and fabled towers of mysterious Carcosa; of terrible Lloigor and hated Zhar; of Ithaqua the Snow-Thing, of Chaugnar Faugn and N'gha-Kthun, of unknown Kadath and the Fungi from Yuggoth—so he talked for hours while the sounds below continued and I sat listening in a deadly, terror-fraught fear. And yet that fear was needless, for with the dawn the stars paled, and the tumult below died subtly away, fading towards the east and the ocean's deeps, and I went at last to my room, eagerly, to dress in preparation for my leave-taking.

4

IN LITTLE OVER a month, I was again on my way to the Tuttle estate, via Arkham, in response to an urgent card from Paul, upon which he had scrawled in a shaky hand the single word: Come! Even if he had not written, I should have considered it my duty to return to the old house on the Aylesbury Road, despite my distaste for Tuttle's soul-shaking research and the now active fear I could not help but feel. Still, I had been holding off ever since coming to the decision that I should attempt to dissuade Tuttle from further research until the morning of the day on which his card came. On that morning I found in the *Transcript* a garbled story from Arkham: I would not have noticed it at all, had it not been for the small head to take the eye: *Outrage in Arkham Cemetery,* and below: *Tuttle Vault Violated.* The story was brief, and disclosed little beyond the information already conveyed by the headings:

> It was discovered here early this morning that vandals had broken into and partly destroyed the Tuttle vault in Arkham cemetery. One wall is smashed almost beyond repair, and the coffins have been disturbed. It has been reported that the coffin of the late Amos Tuttle is missing, but confirmation cannot be had by the time this issue goes to press.

Immediately upon reading this vague bulletin, I was seized with the strongest apprehension, come upon me from I know not what source; yet I felt at once that the outrage perpetrated upon the vault was not an ordinary crime, and I could not help connecting it in my mind with the occurrences at the old Tuttle house. I had therefore resolved to go to Arkham, and thence to see Paul Tuttle, before his card arrived; his brief message alarmed me still more, if possible, and at the same time convinced me of what I feared—that some revolting connection existed between the cemetery outrage and the things that walked in the earth beneath the house on Aylesbury Road. But at the same time I became aware of a deep reluctance to leave Boston, obsessed with an intangible fear of invisible danger from an unknown source. Still, duty compelled my going, and however strongly I might shun it, go I must.

I arrived in Arkham in early afternoon and went at once to the cemetery, in my capacity as solicitor, to ascertain the extent of the damage done. A police guard had been established, but I was permitted to examine the premises as soon as my identity had been disclosed. The newspaper account, I found, had been shockingly inadequate, for the ruin of the Tuttle vault was virtually complete, its coffins exposed to the sun's warmth, some of them broken open, revealing long-dead bones. While it was true that Amos Tuttle's coffin had disappeared in the night, it had been found at midday in an open field about two miles east of Arkham, too far from the road to have been carried there; and the mystery of its being there was, if anything, deeper now than at the time the coffin had been found; for an investigation had disclosed certain deep indentations set at wide intervals in the earth, some of them as much as forty feet in diameter! It was as if some monstrous creature had walked there, though I confess that this thought occurred only within my own mind; the impressions in the earth remained a mystery upon which no light was thrown even by the wildest surmises as to their source. This may have been partly due to the more startling fact that had emerged immediately upon the finding of the coffin: the body of Amos Tuttle had vanished, and a search of the surrounding terrain had failed to disclose it. So much I learned from the custodian of the cemetery before I set out along the Aylesbury Road, refusing to think further about this incredible information until I had spoken with Paul Tuttle.

This time my summons at his door was not immediately answered, and I had begun to wonder with some apprehension whether something had happened to him, when I detected a faint scuffling sound beyond the door, and almost immediately heard Tuttle's muffled voice.

"Who is it?"

"Haddon," I replied, and heard what seemed to be a gasp of relief.

The door opened, and it was not until it had closed that I became aware of the nocturnal darkness of the hall, and saw that the window at the far end had been tightly shuttered, and that no light fell into the long corridor from any of the rooms opening off it. I forebore to ask the question that came to my tongue and turned instead to Tuttle. It was some time before my eyes had mastered the unnatural darkness sufficiently to make him out, and then I was conscious of a distinct feeling of shock; for Tuttle had changed from a tall, upright man in his prime to a bent, heavy man of uncouth and faintly

repulsive appearance, betraying an age which actually was not his. And his first words filled me with high alarm.

"Quick now, Haddon," he said. "There's not much time."

"What is it? What's wrong, Paul?" I asked.

He disregarded this, leading the way into the library, where an electric candle burned dimly. "I've made a packet of some of my uncle's most valuable books—*R'lyeh Text,* the *Book of Eibon,* the Pnakotic Manuscripts—some others. These must go to the library of Miskatonic University by your hand today without fail. They are henceforth to be considered the property of the library. And here is an envelope containing certain instructions to you, in case I fail to get in touch with you either personally or by telephone—which I have had installed here since your last visit—by ten o'clock tonight. You are staying, I assume, at the Lewiston House. Now attend me closely: if I fail to telephone you to the contrary before ten o'clock tonight, you are to follow the instructions herein contained without hesitation. I advise you to act immediately, and, since you may feel them too unusual to proceed swiftly, I have already telephoned Judge Wilton and explained that I've left some strange but vital instructions with you, but that I want them carried out to the letter."

"What's happened, Paul?" I asked.

For a moment it seemed as if he would speak freely, but he only shook his head and said, "As yet I do not know all. But this much I can say: we have both, my uncle and I, made a terrible mistake. And I fear it is now too late to rectify it. You have learned of the disappearance of Uncle Amos's body?"

I nodded.

"It has since turned up."

I was astounded, since I had only just come from Arkham, and no such intelligence had been imparted to me. "Impossible!" I exclaimed. "They are still searching."

"Ah, no matter," he said oddly. "It is not there. It is here—at the foot of the garden, where it was abandoned when it was found useless."

At this, he jerked his head up suddenly, and we heard the shuffling and grunting sound that came from somewhere in the house. But in a moment it died away, and he turned again to me.

"The haven," he muttered, and gave a sickly laugh. "The tunnel was

built by Uncle Amos, I am sure. But it was not the haven Hastur wanted—though it serves the minions of his half-brother, Great Cthulhu."

It was almost impossible to realize that the sun shone outside, for the murkiness of the room and the atmosphere of impending dread that hung over me combined to lend to the scene an unreality apart from the world from which I had just come, despite the horror of the violated vault. I perceived also about Tuttle an air of almost feverish expectancy coupled with a nervous haste; his eyes shone oddly and seemed more prominent than I had previously known them, his lips seemed to have coarsened and thickened, and his beard had become matted to a degree I would not have thought possible. He listened now only for a moment before he turned back to me.

"I myself need to stay for the present; I have not finished mining the place, and that must be done," he resumed erratically, but went on before the questions that rose in me could find utterance. "I've discovered that the house rests upon a natural artificial foundation, that below the place there must be not only the tunnel, but a mass of cavernous structures, and I believe that these caverns are for the most part water-filled—and perhaps inhabited," he added as a sinister afterthought. "But this, of course, is at the present time of small importance. I have no immediate fear of what is below, but what I know is to come."

Once again he paused to listen, and again vague, distant sounds came to our ears. I listened intently, hearing an ominous fumbling, as if some creature were trying a door, and strove to discover or guess at its origin. I had thought at first that the sound emanated from somewhere within the house, thought almost instinctively of the attic; for it seemed to come from above, but in a moment it was borne in upon me that the sound did not derive from any place within the house, nor yet from any portion of the house outside, but grew from some place beyond that, from *a point in space beyond the walls of the house*—a fumbling, plucking noise which was not associated in my consciousness with any recognizable material sounds, but was rather an unearthly invasion. I peered at Tuttle, and saw that his attention was also for something from outside, for his head was somewhat lifted and his eyes looked beyond the enclosing walls, bearing in them a curiously rapt expression, not without fear, nor yet without a strange air of helpless waiting.

"That is Hastur's sign," he said in a hushed voice. "When the Hyades

rise and Aldebaran stalks the sky tonight, He will come. The Other will be here with His water people, those of the primal gilled races." Then he began to laugh suddenly, soundlessly, and with a sly, half-mad glance, added, "And Cthulhu and Hastur shall struggle here for the haven while Great Orion strides above the horizon, with Betelgeuse where the Elder Gods are, who alone can block the evil designs of these hellish spawn!"

My astonishment at his words doubtless showed in my face and in turn made him understand what shocked hesitation and doubt I felt, for abruptly his expression altered, his eyes softened, his hands clasped and unclasped nervously, and his voice became more natural.

"But perhaps this tires you, Haddon," he said. "I will say no more, for the time grows short, the evening approaches, and in a little while the night. I beg you to have no question about following the instructions I have outlined in this brief note for your eyes. I charge you to follow my directions implicitly. If it is as I fear, even that may be of no avail; if it is not, I shall reach you in time."

With that he picked up the packet of books, placed it in my hands, and led me to the door, whither I followed him without protest, for I was bewildered and not a little unmanned at the strangeness of his actions, the uncanny atmosphere of brooding horror that clung to the ancient, menace-ridden house.

At the threshold he paused briefly and touched my arm lightly. "Goodbye, Haddon," he said with friendly intensity.

Then I found myself on the stoop in the glare of the lowering sunlight so bright that I closed my eyes against it until I could again accustom myself to its brilliance, while the cheerful chortle of a late bluebird on a fence-post across the road sounded pleasantly in my ears, as if to belie the atmosphere of dark fear and eldritch horror behind.

5

I COME NOW to that portion of my narrative upon which I am loath to embark, not alone because of the incredibility of what I must write, but because it can at best be a vague, uncertain account, replete with surmises and remarkable, if disjointed, evidence of horror-torn, eon-old evil beyond time, of primal things that lurk just outside the pale of life we know, of terrible,

animate survival in the hidden places of earth. How much of this Tuttle learned from those hellish texts he entrusted to my care for the locked shelves of Miskatonic University Library, I cannot say. Certain it is that he guessed many things he did not know until too late; of others, he gathered hints, though it is to be doubted that he fully comprehended the magnitude of the task upon which he so thoughtlessly embarked when he sought to learn why Amos Tuttle had willed the deliberate destruction of his house and books.

Following my return to Arkham's ancient streets, events succeeded events with undesirable rapidity. I deposited Tuttle's packet of books with Doctor Llanfer at the library, and made my way immediately after to Judge Wilton's house, where I was fortunate enough to find him. He was just sitting down to supper, and invited me to join him, which I did, though I had no appetite of any kind, indeed, food seeming repugnant to me. By this time all the fears and intangible doubts I had held had come to a head within me, and Wilton saw at once that I was labouring under an unusual nervous strain.

"Curious thing about the Tuttle vault, isn't it?" he ventured shrewdly, guessing at the reason for my presence in Arkham.

"Yes, but not half so curious as the circumstance of Amos Tuttle's body reposing at the foot of his garden," I replied.

"Indeed," said he without any visible sign of interest, his calmness serving to restore me in some measure to a sense of tranquility. "I dare say you've come from there and know whereof you speak."

At that, I told him as briefly as possible the story I had come to tell, omitting only a few of the more improbable details, but not entirely succeeding in dismissing his doubts, though he was far too much a gentleman to permit me to feel them. He sat for a while in thoughtful silence after I had finished, glancing once or twice at the clock, which showed the hour to be already past seven. Presently he interrupted his revery to suggest that I telephone Lewiston House and arrange for any call for me to be transferred to Judge Wilton's home. This I did instantly, somewhat relieved that he had consented to take the problem seriously enough to devote his evening to it.

"As for the mythology," he said, directly upon my return to the room, "it *can be* dismissed as the creation of a mad mind, the Arab Abdul Alhazred. I say advisedly, it *can be,* but in the light of the things which have happened

in Innsmouth I should not like to commit myself. However, we are not at present in session. The immediate concern is for Paul Tuttle himself; I propose that we examine his instructions to you forthwith."

I produced the envelope at once, and opened it. It contained but a single sheet of paper, bearing these cryptic and ominous lines.

"I have mined the house and all. Go *immediately* without delay, to the pasture gate west of the house, where in the shrubbery on the right side of the lane as you approach from Arkham, I have concealed the detonator. My Uncle Amos was right—it should have been done in the first place. If you fail me, Haddon, then before God you loose upon the countryside such a scourge as man has never known and will never see again—if indeed he survives it!"

Some inkling of the cataclysmic truth must at that moment have begun to penetrate my mind, for when Judge Wilton leaned back, looked at me quizzically, and asked, "What are you going to do?" I replied without hesitation: "I'm going to follow those instructions to the letter!"

He gazed at me for a moment without comment; then he bowed to the inevitable and settled back. "We shall wait for ten o'clock together," he said gravely.

The final act of the incredible horror that had its focal point in the Tuttle house took place just a little before ten, coming upon us in the beginning in so disarmingly prosaic a manner that the full horror, when it came, was doubly shocking and profound. For at five minutes to ten, the telephone rang. Judge Wilton took it at once, and even from where I sat I could hear the agonized voice of Paul Tuttle calling my name.

I took the telephone from Judge Wilton.

"This is Haddon," I said with a calmness I did not feel. "What is it Paul?"

"Do it now!" he cried. "Oh, God, Haddon—right away—before . . . too late. Oh, God—the haven! *The Haven* . . . You know the place . . . pasture gate. Oh, God be quick! . . ." And then there happened what I shall never forget: the sudden, terrible degeneration of his voice, so that it was as if it crumpled together and sank into abysmal mouthings; for the sounds that came over the wire were bestial and inhuman—shocking gibberings and crude, brutish, drooling sounds, from among which certain of them re-

curred again and again, and I listened in steadily mounting horror to the triumphant gibbering before it died away:

"Iä! Iä! Hastur! Ugh! Ugh! Iä Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Shub-Niggurath! . . . Hastur—Hastur cf'tagn! Iä! Iä! Hastur! . . ."

Then abruptly all sound died away, and I turned to face Judge Wilton's terror-stricken features. And yet I did not see him, nor did I see anything in my understanding of what must be done; for abruptly, with cataclysmic effect, I understood what Tuttle had failed to know until too late. And at once I dropped the telephone; at once I ran hatless and coatless from the house into the street, with the sound of Judge Wilton frantically summoning police over the telephone fading into the night behind me. I ran with unnatural speed from the shadowed, haunted streets of witch-cursed Arkham into the October night, down the Aylesbury Road, into the lane and the pasture gate, where for one brief instant, while sirens blew behind me, I saw the Tuttle house through the orchard outlined in a hellish purple glow, beautiful but unearthly and tangibly evil.

Then I pushed down the detonator, and with a tremendous roar, the old house burst asunder and flames leaped up where the house had stood.

For a few dazed moments I stood there, aware suddenly of the arrival of police along the road south of the house, before I began to move up to join them, and so saw that the explosion had brought about what Paul Tuttle had hinted: the collapse of the subterranean caverns below the house; for the land itself was settling, slipping down, and the flames that had risen were hissing and steaming in the water gushing up from below.

Then it was that that other thing happened—the last unearthly horror that mercifully blotted out what I saw in the wreckage jutting out above the rising waters—the great protoplasmic mass risen from the centre of the lake forming where the Tuttle house had been, and the thing that came crying out at us across the lawn before it turned to face the other and begin a titanic struggle for mastery interrupted only by the brilliant explosion of light that seemed to emanate from the eastern sky like a bolt of incredibly powerful lightning; a tremendous discharge of energy in the shape of light, so that for one awful moment everything was revealed—before lightning-like appendages descended as from the heart of the blinding pillar of light itself, one seizing the mass in the water, lifting it high, and casting it far out to sea,

the other taking that second thing from the lawn and hurling it, a dark dwindling blot, into the sky, where it vanished among the eternal stars! And then came sudden, absolute, cosmic silence, and where, a moment before, this miracle of light had been, there was now only darkness and the line of trees against the sky, and low in the east the gleaming eye of Betelgeuse as Orion rose into the autumn night.

For an instant I did not know which was worse—the chaos of the previous moment, or the utter black silence of the present; but the small cries of horrified men brought it back to me, and it was borne in upon me then that they at least did not understand the secret horror, the final thing that sears and maddens, the thing that rises in the dark hours to stalk the bottomless depths of the mind. They may have heard, as I did, that thin, far whistling sound, that maddening ululation from the deep, immeasurable gulf of cosmic space, the wailing that fell back along the wind, and the syllables that floated down the slopes of air: *Tekeli-li, tekeli-li, tekeli-li* . . . And certainly they saw the thing that came crying out at us from the sinking ruins behind, the distorted caricature of a human being, with its eyes sunk to invisibility in thick masses of scaly flesh, the thing that flailed its arms bonelessly at us like the appendages of an octopus, *the thing that shrieked and gibbered in Paul Tuttle's voice!*

But they could not know the secret that I alone knew, the secret Amos Tuttle might have guessed in the shadows of his dying hours, the thing Paul Tuttle was too late in learning: *that the haven sought by Hastur the Unspeakable, the haven promised Him Who Is Not To Be Named, was not the tunnel, and not the house, but the body and soul of Amos Tuttle himself, and, failing these, the living flesh and immortal soul of him who lived in that doomed house on the Aylesbury Road!*



I TOOK POSSESSION of my cousin Abel Harrop's house on the last day of April, 1928, because it was plain by that time that the men from the sheriff's office at Aylesbury were either unable or unwilling to make any progress in explaining his disappearance, and I was determined therefore to carry on my own investigation. This was a matter of principle, rather than of affection, for my cousin Abel had always been somewhat apart from the rest of the family; he had had a reputation since his adolescence for being queer and had never made any effort to visit the rest of us or to invite our own visits. Nor was his plain house in a remote valley seven miles off the Aylesbury Pike out of Arkham particularly a place to excite interest in most of us, who lived in Boston and Portland. I especially want this to be clear, since subsequent events make it imperative that no other motive be ascribed to my coming to stay in the house.

My cousin Abel's home was, as I have said, very plain. It was built in the conventional fashion of New England houses, many of which can be seen in scores of villages throughout and even farther south; it was a kind of rectangular house, of two storeys, with a stoop out back and a front porch set in one corner in order to complete the rectangle. This porch had at one time been efficiently screened, but there were now small tears in the screen, and it

presented a general air of decay. However, the house itself, which was of wood, was neat enough; its siding had been painted white less than a year ago before my cousin's disappearance, and this coat of paint had worn well enough so that the house seemed quite new, as apart from the screened porch. There was a woodshed off to the right, and a smoke-house near that. There was also an open well, with a roof over it, and a windlass with buckets on it. On the left there was another, more serviceable pump, and two smaller sheds. As my cousin did not farm, there was no place for animals.

The interior of the house was in good condition. Clearly, my cousin had always kept it well, though the furnishings were somewhat worn and faded, having been inherited from his parents, who had died two decades before. The lower floor consisted of a small, confining kitchen which opened to the stoop out back, an old-fashioned parlour, somewhat larger than most, and a room which had evidently once been a dining-room, but which had been converted into a study by my cousin Abel, and was filled with books—on crude, home-made shelves, on boxes, chairs, a secretaire, and a table. There were even piles of them on the floor, and one book lay open on the table, just as it had lain when my cousin disappeared; they had told me at the courthouse in Aylesbury that nothing had been disturbed. The second storey was a gable storey; its rooms all had sloping roofs, though there were three of them, all small, two of which were bedrooms, and the third a store-room. Each room had one gable window, no more. One of the bedrooms was over the kitchen, one over the parlour, and the store-room was over the study. There was no reason to believe that my cousin Abel had occupied either of the bedrooms, however; indications were that he made use of a couch in the parlour, and, since the couch was softer than usual, I determined to use it also. The stairway to the second floor led up out of the kitchen, thereby contributing to the lack of room.

The events of my cousin's disappearance were very simple, as any reader who may remember the spare newspaper accounts can testify. He had last been seen in Aylesbury early in April; he had bought five pounds of coffee, ten pounds of sugar, some wire, and a large amount of netting. Four days afterwards, on the seventh of April, a neighbour, passing by and failing to observe smoke coming from the chimney, went in, after some reluctance; my cousin had apparently not been very well liked, having a surly nature, and his

neighbours had kept away from him; but, since the seventh was a cold day, Lem Giles had gone up to the door and rapped. When there was no answer, he pushed on the door; it was open and he went in. He found the house deserted and cold, and a lamp which had been used beside a book still open on the table had plainly burned itself out. While Giles thought this a curious state of affairs, he did not report it until three days after that, on the tenth, when he again passed by the house on his way to Aylesbury, and, stopping for a similar reason, found nothing altered in any way in the house. At that time he spoke to a store-keeper in Aylesbury about it and was advised to report the matter at the sheriff's office. With great reluctance, he did so. A deputy-sheriff drove out to my cousin's place and looked around. Since there had been a thaw, there was nothing to show footprints, the snow having been quickly melted away. And since a little of the coffee and sugar my cousin had bought had been used, it was assumed that he had vanished within a day or so of his visit to Aylesbury. There was some evidence—as there still was in the loose pile of netting in a rocking-chair in one corner of the parlour—that my cousin was planning to do something with the netting he had bought; but, since it was of the type used in seines along the coast at Kingsport for the purpose of catching rough fish, his intention was obscured in some mystery.

The efforts of the sheriff's men from Aylesbury were, as I have hinted, only perfunctory. There was nothing to show that they were eager to investigate Abel's disappearance; perhaps they were too readily discouraged by the reticence of his neighbours. I did not mean to be. If the reports of the sheriff's men were reliable—and I had no reason to believe they were not—then his neighbours had steadfastly avoided Abel and even now, after his disappearance, when he was presumed dead, they were no more willing to speak of him than they had been to associate with him before. Indeed, I had tangible evidence of the neighbours' feeling before I had been in my cousin's house a day.

Though the house was not wired for electric lights, it was on a telephone line. When the telephone rang in mid-afternoon—less than two hours after my arrival at the house—I went over and took the receiver off the hook, forgetting that my cousin was on a party line. I had been dilatory to answer, and when I removed the receiver, someone was already talking.

Even then, I would have replaced the receiver without more ado, had it not been for mention of my cousin's name. Being possessed of a natural share of curiosity, I stood still, listening.

". . . somebody's come to Abe Harrop's house," came a woman's voice. "Lem come by there from town ten minutes ago and seen it."

Ten minutes, I thought. That would be Lem Giles' place, the nearest neighbour up the Pocket and over the hill.

"Oh, Mis' Giles, ye don't s'pose *he's* come back?"

"Hope the Lord he don't! But 'tain't *him.* Leastwise, Lem said it didn't look like him nohow."

"If *he* comes back, I want to git aout o' here. There's been enough goin's-on for a decent body."

"They ain't found hide nor hair of *him.*"

"An' they wun't, neither. *They* got him. I knowed he was a-callin' 'em. Amos told him right off to git rid o' them books, but he knowed better. A-settin' there night after night, readin' in them devilish books."

"Don't you worry none, Hester."

"All these goin's-on, it's a God's mercy a body's alive to worry!"

This somewhat ambiguous conversation convinced me that the natives of this secluded Pocket of hill country knew far more than they had told the men from the sheriff's office. But this initial conversation was only the beginning. Thereafter the telephone rang at half-hour intervals, and my arrival at my cousin's house was the principal topic of conversation. Thereafter, too, I listened shamelessly.

The neighbours circling the Pocket where the house stood numbered seven families, none of which was in sight of any part of my cousin's house. There were in this order: up the Pocket, Lem and Abbey Giles, and their two sons, Arthur and Albert, with one daughter, Virginia, a feeble-minded girl in her late twenties; beyond them, well up into the next Pocket, Lute and Jethro Corey, bachelors, with a hired man, Curtis Begbie; east of them, deep in the hills, Seth Whateley, his wife, Emma, and their three children, Willie, Mamie, and Ella; down from them, and opposite my cousin's house about a mile to the east, Laban Hough, a widower, his children, Susie and Peter, and his sister, Lavinia; about a half mile further down, along the road that led into the Pocket, Clem Osborn and his wife, Marie, with two hired men, John and Andrew Baxter; and finally, over the hills west of my cousin's

house, Rufus and Angeline Wheeler, with their sons, Perry and Nathaniel; and the three spinster Hutchins sisters, Hester, Josephine, and Amelia, with two hired men, Jesse Trumbull and Amos Whateley.

All these people were connected to the single party line which included my cousin's telephone. In the course of three hours, what with one woman calling another, back and forth without any end before supper-time, everyone on the line had been informed of my coming, and, as each woman added her bit of information, each of the others learned who I was, and correctly guessed my purpose. All this was perhaps natural enough in such isolated neighbourhoods, where the most trivial event is a subject of deep concern to people who have little else to engage their attention; but what was disturbing about this fire of gossip on the party wire was the unmistakable undercurrent of fear which was omnipresent. Clearly, my cousin Abel Harrop had been shunned for some reason connected with this incredible fear of him and whatever it was he was doing. It was sobering to reflect that out of such primitive fear could very easily rise the decision to kill in order to escape that fear.

I knew it would be no easy task to break down the suspicious reserve of the neighbours, but I was determined that it must and would be done. I retired early that night, but I did not reckon with the difficulties of going to sleep in such an environment as my cousin's house. Where I had expected an unbroken silence, I found instead a maddening cacophony of sound which assaulted and engulfed the house. Beginning a half hour after sundown, in mid-twilight, there was such a calling of whippoorwills as I have never heard before; where one bird had called alone for five minutes or thereabouts, in thirty minutes there were twenty birds calling, and in an hour the number of whippoorwills seemed to have risen to well over a hundred. Moreover, the configuration of the Pocket was such that the hills at one side threw back the echoes of sounds from the other, so that the voices of a hundred birds soon assumed the proportions of two, varying in intensity from a demanding scream rising with explosive force from just beyond my window to a faintly whispered call coming from far up or down the valley. Knowing a little of the habits of whippoorwills, I fully expected the calls to cease within an hour of beginning, and to start up again just before dawn. In this I was mistaken. Not only did the birds call incessantly all night long, but it was unmistakably evident that a large number of them flew in from the woods to

sit on the roof of the house, as well as on the sheds and the ground around the house, making such a deafening racket that I was completely unable to sleep until dawn, when, one by one, they drifted away and were silent.

I knew then that I could not long withstand this nerve-wracking cacophony of song.

I had not slept an hour before I was awakened, still exhausted, by the ringing of the telephone. I got up and took down the receiver, wondering what was wanted at this hour, and who was calling. I muttered a sleepy, "Hello."

"Harrop?"

"This is Dan Harrop," I said.

"Got suthin' to tell ye. Air ye listenin'?"

"Who is this?" I said.

"Listen t' me, Harrop. If you knows what's good fer ye, ye'll git aout o' there as fast as ye c'n git!"

Before I could register my astonishment, the line went dead. I was still somewhat drowsy from lack of sleep. I stood for a moment; then hung up the receiver. A man's voice, gruff and old. Certainly one of the neighbours; the telephone bell had rung as if it had been ground by someone on the line and not by the central.

I was half-way back to my makeshift bed in the parlour when the telephone rang again. Though it was not my ring, I turned back to it at once. The hour was now six-thirty, and the sun shone over the hill. It was Emma Whateley calling Lavinia Hough.

"Vinnie, did ye hear 'em las' night?"

"Land sakes, yes! Emma, do you s'pose it means . . . ?"

"I don't know. It was suthin' turrible the way they went on. Ain't heerd nuthin' like it since Abel was aout in the woods las' summer. Kept Willie and Mamie awake all night. It scares me, Vinnie."

"Me, too. Gawd, what if it starts again?"

"Hush up, Vinnie. A body can't tell who's listenin'."

The telephone rang throughout the morning, and this was the topic of conversation. It was soon borne in upon me that it was the whippoorwills and their frenetic calling in the night which had excited the neighbours. I had thought it annoying, but it had not occurred to me to think it unusual. However, judging by what I overheard, it was not only unusual but ominous

for the birds to call with such insistence. It was Hester Hutchins who put the superstitious fears of the neighbours into words, when she told about the whippoorwills to a cousin who had telephoned from Dunwich, some miles to the north.

"The hills was a-talkin again las' night, Cousin Flora," she said in a kind of hushed but urgent voice. "Heard 'em all night long, couldn't hardly sleep. Warn't nuthin but whippoorwills, hundreds an' hundreds of 'em all night long. Come from Harrop's Pocket, but they was so loud they might's well 've been on the porch rail. They're a-waitin' to ketch somebody's soul, just the way they was when Benjy Wheeler died an' sister Hough, an' Curtis Begbie's wife, Annie. I know, I know—they dun't fool me none. Somebody's a-goin' to die—an' soon, mark my words."

A strange superstition, surely, I thought. Nevertheless, that night, following a day too busy to permit my making inquiries of the neighbours, I set myself to listening for the whippoorwills. I sat in the darkness at the study window, but there was scarcely any need for light, for a moon but three days from the full shone into the valley and filled it with that green-white light which is the peculiar property of moonlight. Long before darkness came into the valley, it had taken possession of the wooded hills enclosing it; and it was from the dark places in the woods that the first steady *whippoorwill* began to sound and recur. Previous to the voices of the whippoorwills there had been strangely few of the customary evening songs of birds; only a few nighthawks had appeared against the evening sky to spiral upwards crying shrilly, and plummet down in a breathtaking sky-coast, making an odd *zoom* at the trough of the dive. But these were no longer visible or audible as darkness fell, and one after another, the whippoorwills began to call.

As darkness invaded the valley, the whippoorwills did likewise. Undeniably, the whippoorwills drifted down out of the hills on noiseless wings towards the house in which I sat. I saw the first one come, a dark object in the moonlight, to the roof of the woodshed; in a matter of moments, another bird followed, then another and another. Soon I saw them come to the ground between the sheds and the house, and I knew they were on the roof of the house itself. They occupied every roof, every fence post. I counted over a hundred of them before I stopped counting, being unsure about their flight-patterns, since I observed some of them moving about from one place to another.

Never once did their calling cease. I used to think that the call of the whippoorwill was a sweetly nostalgic sound, but never again. Surrounding the house, the birds made the most hellish cacophony conceivable; whereas the call of a whippoorwill heard from a distance is mellow and pleasant, the same call heard just outside the window is unbelievably harsh and noisy, a cross between a scream and an angry rattle. Multiplied by scores, the calls were truly maddening, grating on me to such an extent that after an hour of it, following the ordeal of the previous night, I took refuge in cotton stuffed into my ears. Even this afforded but temporary relief, but, with its help and the exhaustion I felt after the sleepless night just past, I was able to sleep after a fashion. My last thought before sleep overcame me was that I must go on about my business without delay, lest I be driven out of my mind by the ceaseless insistence of the whippoorwills which obviously meant to come down out of the hills every night in their season.

I was awake before dawn; the soporific of sleep had worn off, but the whippoorwills had not ceased to call. I sat up on my couch, and presently got up to look out of the window. The birds were still there, though they had moved a little farther away from the house now, and were no longer quite so numerous. A faint hint of dawn shone in the east, and there, too, taking the place of the moon, which had gone down, shone the morning stars—the planet Mars, already well up the eastern heaven, with Venus and Jupiter, less than five degrees above the eastern rim, and glowing with supernal splendour.

I dressed, made myself some breakfast, and for the first time stopped to look at the books my cousin Abel had gathered together. I had given a cursory glance at the open book on the table, but it meant nothing to me, since it appeared to be printed in a type-face which was an imitation of someone's script, and was therefore scarcely legible. Moreover, it concerned alien matters, which seemed to me the veriest fancies of someone's drug-ridden mind. My cousin's other books, however, appeared to be of similar nature. A file of the *Old Farmer's Almanac* stood out with welcome familiarity, but this alone was familiar. Though I was never a poorly-read man, I confess to a feeling of utter strangeness before my cousin's library, if such it can be called.

Yet a cursory examination of it filled me with a new respect for my cousin, for his abilities certainly exceeded my own in the matter of languages, if he had been able to read all the tomes he had collected. For they

were in several languages, as their titles indicated, and most of them had no meaning for me at all. I remembered having vaguely heard of the Rev. Ward Phillips' book, *Thaumaturgical Prodigies in the New-English Canaan,* but of such books as the *Cultes des Goules,* by Comte d'Erlette, *De Vermis Mysteriis,* by Dr. Ludvig Prinn, Lully's *Ars Magna et Ultima,* the Pnakotic Manuscripts, the *R'lyeh Text,* Von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten,* and many other similar titles I had never heard. It did not occur to me, frankly, that these books might contain a key to my cousin's disappearance, until later that day, when finally I did take time to make some attempt to see the neighbours, for the purpose of making inquiry among them in the hope of accomplishing more than the men from the sheriff's office.

I went first to the Giles place, which was approximately one mile up into the hills directly south of my cousin's house. My reception was not encouraging. Abbey Giles, a tall, gaunt woman, saw me from the window, and, shaking her head, refused to come to the door. As I stood in the yard, wondering how I could convince her that I was not dangerous, Lem Giles came hurriedly from the barn; the belligerence of his gaze gave me pause.

"What're ye wantin' here, Stranger?" he asked.

Though he called me "Stranger," I felt that he knew me perfectly well. I introduced myself and explained that I was endeavouring to learn the truth about my cousin's disappearance. Could he tell me anything about Abel?

"Can't tell ye nutin'," he said shortly. "Go ast the sheriff; I tol' him everything I got to say."

"I think people hereabouts know more than they are saying," I said firmly.

"Might be. But they ain't sayin' it, and that's a fact."

More than this I could not get out of Lem Giles. I went on to the Corey place, but no one was at home there; so I took a ridge path I was confident would lead me to the Hutchins place, as it did. But before I could get to the house, I was seen from one of the hill fields, someone hailed me, and I found myself confronting a barrel-chested man half a head taller than myself, who demanded truculently to know where I was going.

"I'm on my way to Hutchins," I said.

"No need your goin', then," he said. "They ain't to home. I work for 'em. Name's Amos Whateley."

But I had spoken to Amos Whateley before; I recognized his voice as

that of the man who early that morning told me to "git aout o' there as fast as ye c'n git!" I looked at him for a minute in silence.

"I'm Dan Harrop," I said finally. "I came up here to find out what happened to my cousin Abel, and I mean to find out."

I could see that he had known who I was. He stood considering me for a moment before he spoke. "An' if ye find out, ye'll go?"

"I have no other reason for staying."

He seemed indecisive, still, as if he did not trust me. "Ye'll sell the haouse?" he wanted to know.

"I can't use it."

"I'll tell ye then," he said with abrupt decision. "Yer cousin, him as was Abel Harrop, was took off by Them from Aoutside. He called 'em an' They come." He paused suddenly as he had begun to speak, his dark eyes searching my face. "Ye dun't believe," he cried. "Ye dun't know!"

"Know what?" I asked.

"Abaout Them from Aoutside." He looked distressed. "I hadn't to a tol' ye, then. Ye'll pay no mind to me."

I tried to be patient, and explained once more that I wanted only to know what had happened to Abel.

But he was no longer interested in my cousin's fate. Still searching my face keenly, he demanded, "The books! Hev ye read the books?"

I shook my head.

"I tell ye to burn 'em—burn 'em all, afore it's too late!" He spoke with almost fanatic insistence. "I know whut's in 'em, summat."

It was this strange adjuration which ultimately sent me to the books my cousin had left.

That evening I sat down at the table where my cousin must so often have sat, by the light of the same lamp, with the chorus of whippoorwills already rising outside, to look with greater care at the book my cousin had been reading. I discovered almost at once, to my astonishment, that the print which I had mistaken for an imitation of script was indeed script, and I had, further, the uncomfortable conviction that the manuscript, which had no title, was bound in human skin. Certainly it was very old, and it had the appearance of having been put together of scattered sheets of paper, on which its compiler had copied sentences and pages from books not his to own. Some of it was in Latin, some in French, some in English; though the

writer's script was too execrable to permit any assurance in reading the Latin or French, I could make out the English after some study.

Most of it was plainly gibberish, but there were two pages which my cousin—or some previous reader—had marked in red crayon, and these I deemed must have been of some signal importance to Abel. I set about to make some sort of clarity out of the crabbed script. The first of them was fortunately short.

"To summon Yogge-Sothothe from the Outside, be wise to wait upon the Sun in the Fifth House, when Saturn is in trine; draw the pentagram of fire, and speak the Ninth Verse thrice, repeating which each Roodemas and Hallow's Eve causeth the Thing to breed in the Outside Spaces beyond the gate, of which Yogge-Sothothe is the Guardian. The once will not bring Him, but may bring Another Who is likewise desirous of growth, and if He have not the blood of Another, He may seek thine own. Therefore be not unwise in these things."

To this my cousin had written a postcript: "Cf. page 71 in *Text*."

Putting aside this reference, I turned to the other marked page, but no matter how carefully I read it, I could not make out of it anything but a highly fanciful rigmarole evidently copied faithfully from a far older manuscript—

> "Concern'g ye Old Ones, 'tis writ, they wait ev'r at ye Gate, & ye Gate is all places at all times, for They know noth'g of time or place but are in all time & in all place togeth'r without appear'g to be, & there are those amongst Them which can assume divers Shapes & Featurs & any gi'n Shape & any giv'n Face & ye Gates are for Them ev'rywhere, but ye 1st, was that which I caus'd to be op'd, Namely, in Irem, ye City of Pillars, ye City under ye Desert, but wher'r men sayeth ye forbidd'n Words, they shall cause there a Gate to be establish'd & shall wait upon Them Who Come through ye Gate, ev'n as ye Dhols, & ye Abomin. Mi-Go, & ye Tcho-Tcho peop., & ye Deep Ones. & ye Gugs, & ye Gaunts of ye Night & ye Shoggoths & ye Voormis, & ye Shantaks which guard Kadath in ye Colde Waste & ye Plateau Leng. All are alike ye Children of ye Elder Gods, but ye Great Race of Yith & ye Gr. Old Ones fail'g to agree, one with another, & boath with ye Elder Gods, separat'd, leav'g ye Gr. Old Ones in possession of ye Earth, while ye Great Race, return'g

> from Yith took up Their Abode forward in Time in Earth-Land not yet known to those who walk ye Earth today, & there wait till there shall come again ye winds & ye Voices which drove Them forth before & That which Walketh on ye Winds over ye Earth & in ye spaces that are among ye Stars forev'r."

I read this with amazement and wonder, but since it meant nothing to me, I returned to the original marked page and attempted to puzzle meaning out of that. I could not, save that I had an uneasy memory of Amos Whateley's reference to "Them Outside." I guessed, finally, that my cousin's appended note referred to the *R'lyeh Text;* so I took up this slender volume and looked to the indicated page.

My language-study was unfortunately not thorough enough to read the page with any sure meaning, but it appeared to be a formula or chant summoning some ancient being in which some primitive peoples had evidently once believed. I went through it uncertainly in silence; then I read it slowly aloud, but it seemed to have no greater meaning audibly, except only as a curious aspect of ancient religious credos, for to such facets of existence I deemed it was related.

By the time I rose wearily from the books, the whippoorwills had once again taken possession of the valley. I put out the light and looked into the moonlit darkness beyond the house. The birds were there, as before; they made dark shadows on the grass, on the roofs. In the moonlight they had a strange appearance of being uncannily distorted, and they were certainly abnormally large birds. I had thought of whippoorwills as not more than ten inches in length, but these birds were easily twelve and fourteen inches long, and of an equivalent thickness, so that they appeared singularly large. Doubtless, however, this was due to some trick of moonlight and shadow, acting upon a tired and already overburdened imagination. But there was no gainsaying the fact that the vehemence and loudness of their calls was in ratio to their apparently abnormal size. There was considerably less movement among them that night, however, and I had an uneasy conviction that they sat there calling as if calling *to* someone or something or as if *waiting* for something to happen, so that Hester Hutchins' hushed urgent voice came back to my mind with disturbing persistence, "They're a-waitin' to ketch somebody's soul . . ."

2

THE STRANGE EVENTS which subsequently took place at my cousin's house date from that night. Whatever it was that set it in motion, some malign force seemed to possess the entire valley. Sometime during that night I woke, convinced that something more than the ceaseless storming of the whippoorwills gave voice in the moonlit dark. I lay listening, almost instantly wide awake, listening for whatever it was, listening until the endless *whippoorwill* screaming from a thousand throats seemed to mark the very pulsing of my blood, the throbbing of the spheres!

Then I heard it—and listened—and doubted the evidence of my own ears.

A kind of chanting, rising momentarily to ululation, but certainly in a tongue I did not know. Even now I cannot describe it with any adequacy. Perhaps, if one could imagine turning on several radio stations at once and listening to alien languages pouring forth from each one, hopelessly jumbled, it might establish a sort of parallel. Yet, there seemed to be a kind of pattern, and, try as I might, I could not disabuse myself of this notion. The gibberish I heard mingled uncannily with the crying of the whippoorwills. It reminded me of a litany, with the priest leading the recitative, and the audience murmuring in answer. The sound came intermittently, an odd predominance of consonants with but an occasional vowel. The most intelligible sounds, which seemed to be repeated, were these:

"Llllll-nglui, nnnnn-lagl, fhtagn-nagh, ai Yog-Sothoth!"

These were given voice in a crescendo of sound, bursting explosively at the last syllables, to which the whippoorwills responded in rhythmic song. It was not that they ceased crying, but only that when the other sounds came, the calling of the whippoorwills receded and faded as if into distance, then rushed forward and swelled out triumphantly in answer to the sounds in the night.

Strange and terrible as these sounds were, however, their source was even more frightening, for they came from somewhere within the house—either from the rooms above or from those below; and, with each moment that I listened, I became more and more convinced that the hideous gibberish I heard arose from somewhere within the room where I lay. It was as if the

very walls pulsed with the sound, as if the entire house throbbed with this incredible mouthing, as if, indeed, my very being took part in this horror-fraught litany—not passively, but actively, even joyously!

How long I lay there virtually in a cataleptic state, I do not know. But eventually the invading sounds ceased; I was briefly aware of what seemed to be earth-shaking steps moving into the heavens accompanied by a vast fluttering, as of whippoorwills rising from the roofs and the surrounding earth; then I fell into a deep sleep from which I did not waken until mid-day.

I rose with alacrity then, for I meant to pursue my inquiry among my other neighbours with as much dispatch as possible. But I had intended, too, to look further into my cousin's books; yet that noon, when I came into the study and approached the table, I closed the book he had been reading and threw it carelessly to one side. I did this in full awareness of what I was doing, and yet with the intention of reading in it as much as I could. But there was something else lurking on the edge of my consciousness, a stubborn, unreasonable assurance that I knew all that was in this book, all that was in the rest of them piled here and there, and more than that, *much more.* And even as I took in this conviction, there seemed to rise up from deep inside me, as if it were from an ancestral memory to which I knew no bridge, a towering of awareness, and there crossed before my mind's eye vast and titanic heights and illimitable depths, and I saw great amorphous beings like masses of protoplasmic jelly, thrusting forth tentacle-like appendages, standing on no known earth but on a dark, forbidding ground, devoid of vegetation, stuck out gigantically against no known stars. And in the inner ear I heard names chanted and sung—*Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Hastur, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath,* and many more—and I knew these for the Ancient Ones thrust forth by the Elder Gods and waiting now at the Gate to be summoned to their abode on earth as once in eons past, and all the pomp and glory of serving them, was clear to me, and I knew they would come again to wage their battle for the earth and all the peoples of the earth and once more tempt the wrath of the Elder Gods, even as the poor, pitiable wretches of human-kind tempted the wrath of their own fates! And I knew, as Abel knew, that their servants are the chosen ones who shall worship them and give them shelter, who shall house them and feed them until the time of their coming again, when the Gate is opened wide, and a thousand lesser Gates are opened to them in all the places of earth!

But this vision came and faded, like a flashing picture on a screen, from what source I could not tell. It was so brief, so momentary, that, when it had passed, the sound of the book's fall to the pile where I had thrown it still echoed in the room. I was shaken, for at one and the same time I knew my vision had no meaning and yet I knew it did have an importance out of all proportion to this house or this valley or even to all the world I knew.

I turned and went out of the house into the noon-day sun, and under its beneficent rays, the dark ordeal passed from me. I looked back to the house; it shone white in the sun, with the shadow of an elm lying upon it. I went then into the southeast, striking off through the long neglected fields and pastures towards the Whateley house, which lay about a mile away in that direction. Seth Whateley was a younger brother of Amos's; they had quarrelled years before, I had been told in Aylesbury, about what, no one knew, and now seldom saw or spoke to each other, despite living but two miles apart. Amos had grown close to the Dunwich Whateleys, who were, said the Aylesbury people, "the decayed branch" of one of the old armigerous families of Massachusetts.

The majority of the distance lay over the hill, through heavily wooded slopes and into the valley beyond, and quite often I started up whippoorwills, which flew on noiseless wings, circled a little, and settled horizontally on limbs or on the ground, blending wonderfully well with bark or old leaves, gazing at me with their small black eyes. Here and there, too, I saw eggs lying among the leaves. The hills were alive with whippoorwills, but I did not need this evidence to know that. It seemed to me a singular thing, however, that they should be ten times as numerous on the slope facing into Harrop's Valley than on those opposite. But they were. Descending the slope through the aromatic May woods to the valley where the Whateleys lived, I frightened up only one bird, which vanished noiselessly, and did not move away only a little and turn to regard me in passing. I did not think, then, that the curious attention of the whippoorwills on the near slope was frightening.

I was apprehensive about my reception at the Whateley house, and I soon found that I had good reason to be, for I was met by Seth Whateley carrying a gun, and giving me a stony stare from above that weapon.

"Ye got no call to bother us," he challenged as I approached.

Evidently he had just come from dinner, and had been on his way back

to the field when he caught sight of me; he had then retreated into the house and got his gun. Behind him I could see his wife, Emma, and their three children hanging on to her skirts, looking at me with fear plain in their eyes.

"I don't mean to bother you, Mr. Whateley," I said, as reassuringly as I could and with determined effort to suppress the irritation I felt at this unreasoning wall of suspicion which greeted me wherever I turned. "But I do mean to know what happened to my cousin Abel."

He gave me his stony stare briefly before replying, "We dun't know nuthin'. We ain't the kind to go pryin' araound. Whut yer cousin was a-doin' was his own business es long es he didn't bother us. Even if there's some things better let alone," he added darkly.

"Somebody must have made away with him, Mr. Whateley."

"He was took. That's whut they say my brother Amos says. He was took, body an' soul, an' if a man gits to lookin' where he hadn't oughta, that's whut's a-goin' to happen ev'ry time. No man's hand was raised agin him here—not but what there hadn't oughta hev bin."

"I'm going to find out . . ."

He shifted his gun menacingly. "Ye can't do it here. I tol' you we dun't know nuthin'. An' we dun't. I ain't meaning no offence, but the woman she's upset as all git-out, an I don't aim for her to be more turned out; so you git."

However crude Seth Whateley's invitation was, it was effective enough.

But matters were very much the same at Hough's, though there I was very poignantly aware of a greater tension in the atmosphere—not alone fear, but hatred, too. They were more civil, but anxious to be rid of me, and when at last I took my leave, with no word of help from them in my quest, I was convinced that, however they reasoned, the death of Laban Hough's wife was laid at my cousin's door. It was not evident in what was said so much as in what was not said; the charge lay in the unspoken words lurking behind their eyes and tongues. And I knew without needing to think further, but only by remembering how Hester Hutchins had talked to her cousin Flora about the whippoorwills calling for the souls of Benjy Wheeler and sister Hough and Annie Begbie, that the whippoorwills and my cousin Abel Harrop were linked in the primitive superstition which haunted the waking and sleeping hours of these remote and earthy people; but by what bond these events could be connected, I could not guess. It was patent, moreover, that these people looked upon me with the same fear and dislike—or

loathing—as they had looked upon Abel, and, whatever their reason for hating and fearing Abel had been, the same reason clearly applied to me in their limited capacity for thinking. Yet Abel, as I remembered him, had been even more sensitive than I, and, though surly by nature, he had always been essentially gentle, unwilling to hurt anyone, least of all a fellow-animal, human or otherwise. Doubtless their suspicions had taken rise in the well of dark superstition which is always rife in isolated countrysides, ever lurking ready to spark another Salem terror, and hound to death helpless victims innocent of any crime but knowledge.

It was that night, the night of the full moon, that the horror struck the Pocket.

But before I learned of what happened in the Pocket that night, I went through an ordeal of my own. It began soon after I got home from my last visit that afternoon, to the uncommunicative Osborns, across the hills to the north, after the sun had vanished beyond the western ridge, and I was at a meagre supper. I began to have fancies again, and I couldn't get it out of my head that I wasn't alone in that house. So I left my supper and went through it, first downstairs, and then, taking the lamp—for the gable windows upstairs admitted little light—I went up. All the time I thought I could hear someone calling my name, someone calling to me in Abel's voice, the way it used to sound when we were children and played together here at this place, when his folks were living.

I found something in the store-room, something I could not explain. I found it by accident because I saw that one of the panes was out of the window; I had not noticed that before. The room was filled with boxes and a little discarded furniture; it was stacked neatly enough, and in such a way that the most light could still filter into the room from the one window. Seeing the break, I went over to the window, and when I came around the boxes stacked there, I saw that there was little space between the row of boxes and the window, enough for a chair and a man to sit in it. There was a chair there; there was no man, but there was some clothing that I knew for Abel's, and the way it lay there in the chair was enough to send a chill through me, though I don't know why I was so oddly frightened.

The fact was, the clothes lay there in the most peculiar manner. It was not as if somebody had laid them down like that; I don't think anyone *could* lay clothing just that way. I looked and looked at it, and I could not explain

it in any other way but that somebody had been sitting there and just been pulled out of his clothes, as if he had been sucked out, and the clothes just collapsed with nothing inside them. I put the lamp down and touched them; they were not dusty to any extent; so that meant they had not been there long. I wondered if the sheriff's men had seen them, not that they could have made anything more out of them than I had; so I left them, undisturbed, meaning to notify the sheriff next morning. But what with one thing and another, and everything that happened in the Pocket after that, I forgot about it; so the clothes are still there, sort of fallen together on the chair, just as I found them that night of the May full moon before the window in the store-room. And I set it down here and now, because it is evidence of what I claim, to stand against the terrible doubts that greet me on all sides.

That night the whippoorwills called with maddening insistence.

I heard them first while I was still in the store-room; they had begun to call out of the darkly wooded slopes from which the sunlight had gone, but far down the west, the sun had not set, and, though the Pocket was already in a kind of blue-hazed twilight, the sun still shone outside it, on the road connecting Arkham and Aylesbury. It was early for the whippoorwills, very early, earlier than they had ever called before. Irritated as I was already by the stupid superstitious fear which had repelled every advance I made during the day, I knew I could not stand yet another night of sleeplessness.

But soon the cries and calls were everywhere. *Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!* Nothing but that monotonous screaming and screeching, the constant *Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!* It pressed down from the hills into the valley, it crowded out of the moonlit night where the birds surrounded the house in a vast circle until it seemed that the house itself echoed their cries in a voice of its own, as if every joist and beam, every nail and stone, every board and shingle answered the thunder from outside, the horrible, the maddening *Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!* rising in a cacophonous chorus which invaded and tore every fibre of my being. They made a wave of sound beating against the house, against the hills, once again as if they took part in some eldritch litany, and every cell in my body cried out in anguish at their noisome triumph.

It was about eight o'clock that evening when I knew I must do something. I had not brought any kind of weapon with me, and my cousin's shotgun had been impounded by the sheriff and was still being held in the

courthouse at Aylesbury; but I had found a stout cudgel under the couch where I slept—evidently my cousin's, to be kept at hand in case he was awakened suddenly in the night—and I meant to go out and kill as many of the whippoorwills as I could in the hope that this would drive them away for good. I did not intend to go far; so I left the lamp burning in the study.

At my first step outside the door, the whippoorwills fluttered up, fanning out and away from me. But all my pent-up irritation and wrath burst forth; I ran in among them, swinging wildly, while they fluttered noiselessly up all about me, some of them silent now, but most of them still singing horribly. I pursued them out of the yard, up the road, into the woods, down across the road, back into the woods; I ran far, but how far I do not know, and I know that I killed many of them before I stumbled back to the house at last, exhausted, with only enough energy left to put out the lamp in the study, which had burned very low, and fall upon my couch. Before the distant whippoorwills which had escaped me could converge upon the house again, I was deep in slumber.

Because I do not know what time it was when I came in, I cannot say how long I slept before the ringing of the telephone woke me. Though the sun was already up, the hour was but five-thirty. As was now my habit, I went out into the kitchen, where the telephone was, and took down the receiver. That was how I learned about the coming of the horror.

"Mis' Wheeler, this's Emma Whateley. You heerd the news?"

"No, Mis' Whateley, ain't heerd a thing."

"Gawd! it's awful. It's Bert Giles. He's bin kilt. They found him jest abaout midnight thar whar the road goes acrost Giles' brook, near to the bridge. 'Twas Lute Corey found him, an' they say he let out a yell that woke Lem Giles up, an' the minute Lem heerd Lute hollerin', he knowed, he knowed all right. His ma begged Bert not to go to Arkham, but he was baound an' determined to go, you know haow set all them Gileses is. 'Pears he was a-goin' in with them Baxter men works Osborn's farm, summat under three miles from Gileses, an' he set out to walk to their place so's he could ride with 'em. Wa'n't no sign o' what kilt him, but Seth, who was daown come sunup this mornin' he says the graound's all tore up, like as if thar was a fight. An' he seen poor Bert, or what was left o' him. Gawd! Seth said his throat was all tore out an' his wrists tore open and his clothes jest about to shreds! An' that ain't all, even if 't is the worst. While Seth was a-standin'

thar, Curtis Begbie he come runnin' up an' he said four o' Corey's cows they had night pasturin' in thet south forty was kilt, too, an' all tore up—jest like poor Bert!"

"Gawd!" whimpered Mrs. Wheeler, frightened. "Who will it be the next?"

"Sheriff says 'pears to be some wild animal, but thar hain't no tracks they could see. They bin workin' all araound ever since they got the word, an' Seth he says they hain't faound aout much."

"Oh, it's wuss'n when Abel was here."

"I allus said Abel wasn't the worst. I knowed. I knowed some of Seth's kin-folk—thet Wilbur an' Ol' Whateley—an' they're a sight worse'n a feller like Abel Harrop was. I knowed it, Mis' Wheeler. An' thar's others at Dunwich, too—the Whateleys ain't the only ones."

"If it ain't Abel . . ."

"An' Seth, he says durin' that time he was a-standin' thar lookin' at poor Bert Giles, Amos come up, Amos that ain't said ten words to Seth in ten years, an' he just took one look an' he kind o' muttered to hisself an' Seth says he said, 'That dam' fool spoke the words!' jest like that, an' Seth, he turns to him an' he says, 'Whut's thet you're sayin', Amos?' An' Amos he looks at him an' says, 'Ain't nothin' es bad es a fool whut don't know whut he's got!'"

"Thet Amos Whateley allus was a bad one, Mis' Whateley, an' that's a fact, an' it don't make no difference you're related, it's jest the same."

"Ain't nobody knows it better'n I do, Mis' Wheeler."

By this time other women had joined the conversation, identifying themselves. Mrs. Osborn came on the wire to say that the Baxters, tiring of waiting, and thinking that Bert had changed his mind, had gone on to Arkham. They had come back about eleven-thirty. Hester Hutchins predicted that this was "only the beginnin'. Amos said it." Vinnie Hough cried hysterically that she was of a mind to take the children, her niece and nephew, and flee to Boston until the devil "took his stand somewhere's else." It was only when Hester Hutchins began to tell the rest of them, wildly, that Jesse Trumbull had come in and reported that all the blood had been sucked out of Bert Giles' body and also out of the four Corey cows that I hung up; I could recognize the beginning of the legend and the working of superstition beginning to be constructed on the few pertinent facts.

Throughout the day there were various reports. At noon the sheriff

stopped in perfunctorily to inquire whether I had heard anything in the night, but I replied that I was incapable of hearing anything but whippoorwills. Since everyone else to whom he had talked mentioned having heard the whippoorwills, he was not surprised. He volunteered the information that Jethro Corey had awakened in the night and had heard the cows bellowing, but before he could get dressed to go down they had stopped; so he had assumed they had been disturbed by some animal passing through the pasture—the hills abound in fox and raccoon—and had gone back to bed. Mamie Whateley had heard someone scream; she was sure that it was Bert, but, since she reported it only after having heard all the details of the killing, it was thought that this was only an imaginative afterthought, a pathetic attempt to focus a little attention on herself. After the sheriff had gone, one of his deputies stopped in, too, plainly worried, because their failure to solve the mystery of my cousin's disappearance was already a blot on their record, and this new crime might well bring them further criticism. Apart from these visits and the steady ringing of the telephone, I was not disturbed throughout the day, and I managed to get a little sleep in anticipation of the night's infesting whippoorwills.

Yet that night, curiously, the whippoorwills, for all their damnable calling, did me a good turn. I had gone to sleep, surprisingly, despite their cacophonous cries, and had slept perhaps two hours, when I was awakened. I thought at first that dawn had come, but it had not, and then I realized that what had awakened me was the absence of the whippoorwills' voices; their sudden cessation and the succeeding silence had startled me from my sleep. This curious and unprecedented occurrence fully aroused me; I got up, pulled on my trousers, and went to the window to look out.

I saw a man running from the yard—a big man. I thought at once of what had happened to Albert Giles the night before, and a momentary fear took possession of me, for a big man could perhaps have wreaked the night's havoc, a big man and a homicidal maniac—but then I knew that there was only one man so big in all the valley, and that was Amos Whateley. And the direction in which he was vanishing in the moonlight was that of the Hutchins place, where he worked. My impulse to set out after him, to shout at him, was halted by what I then saw out of the corner of my eyes—a sudden, fitful orange glow. I threw up the window and craned out. Down along one corner the house was burning!

Because I acted without delay, and because a bucket of water already stood under the pump, I was able to put the fire out without the burning of more than a square foot or two of siding and some further charring. But it was clear that the fire had been set, and undoubtedly by Amos Whateley, and, had it not been for the whippoorwills' strange silence, I might have perished in the holocaust. As it was, I was badly shaken, for if my neighbours bore me such ill-feeling as to take such measures to drive me from my cousin's house, what might I still expect of them? Yet, opposition has always strengthened me; and after a few moments, it was again true. I felt convinced anew that if it was my search for the facts behind my cousin's disappearance alarmed them to such a degree as this, then I was on the right track in believing that they knew far more about it than any of them was willing to tell. So I went back to bed determined to face Amos Whateley next day, when I could find him somewhere in the fields, away from the Hutchins house, and we could talk without being overheard.

Accordingly, in mid-morning I sought out Amos Whateley. He was at work in the same hilltop field where he had worked when first I saw him, but this time he did not come to confront me; instead, he stopped the horses and stood watching me. I saw, as I came up towards the stone fence there that his bearded face held both apprehension and defiance. He stood unmoving, save that he pushed his crumpled felt hat farther back on his head; his lips were pressed together in a firm, unyielding line, but his eyes were wary. Since he was not far from the fence, I stopped where I was, along the woods' edge.

"Whateley, I saw you set fire to my house last night," I said. "Why."

There was no answer.

"Come, come—I came up here to talk to you. I could just as easily go into Aylesbury and talk to the sheriff."

"Ye read the books," he spat forth hoarsely. "I tol' ye not tew. Ye read thet place aout laoud; I know ye did. Ye opened the Gate, an' Them from Aoutside kin come. Wa'n't like yer cousin—he called 'em an' They come—but he didn't do whut They wanted; so They took him. But he didn't know, ye didn't larn how tew, an' They're a-settin' right this minute in this valley an' nobody knows whut'll happen next."

It took me a few minutes to make sense out of this rigmarole, and even then it was only a sort of sense, not logical, by any means. Amos apparently

meant to suggest that by reading aloud a passage from the book my cousin had been reading, I had invited some force or being from "outside" into the valley—doubtless an integral part of the natives' superstitions.

"I haven't seen any strangers about," I said curtly.

"Ye dun't allus *see* 'em. Cousin Wilbur says They kin take any shape They like an' They kin git inside ye an' They kin eat through yer mouth an' see through yer eyes, an' if ye hain't got the pertection, They kin take ye the way They took yer cousin. Ye dun't see 'em," he went on, his voice rising now to almost a scream, "because They're inside ye this minute."

I waited for his hysteria to diminish a little. "And what do They eat?" I asked quietly.

"Ye know!" he cried vehemently. "Blood an' sperit—blood to make 'em grow, sperit to make 'em wise to human-kind. Laugh, if ye wants tew, but ye ought tew know. They 'hippoor'lls knows, all right—thet's why they're allus a-singin' an' a-callin' daown by yer place."

I could not help smiling, though his earnestness was not to be questioned and forestalled the laughter he had thought was coming.

"But that doesn't explain why you should try to burn my house down—and me, too, for all I know."

"I didn't mean ye no harm, but I wanted for ye to git. If ye hain't got no house, ye can't stay."

"And do you represent the opinion of all the others?"

"I know the most," he said, with a faint pride showing through his defiant apprehension. "My Grandpaw hed the books, an' he tol' me lots, an' Cousin Wilbur, he knowed, too, an' I know thar's lots of things the rest dun't know abaout whut goes on aout thar—" he waved one arm towards the heavens—"or daown thar"—he pointed underfoot—"an' lots they needn't to know, less'n it'd scare 'em. An' only half-knowin' it's wuss'n nuthin' a-tall. Ye should-a burnt them books, Mr. Harrop—I tol ye. It's too late naow."

I searched his face in vain for any sign to show that he was not serious; he was wholly sincere, even a little regretful, as if he were sorry he had to consign me to whatever nameless fate he foresaw. For a moment I was uncertain as to how to deal with him. One cannot simply overlook an attempt to burn one's house down, and, for all I knew, one's self with it.

"Very well, Amos. Whatever it is you know is your affair. But I know you set fire to my house, and I can't overlook that. I'll expect you to make

that right. When you have the time, you can come down and repair it; if you do that, I'll not report you to the sheriff."

"Nuthin' else either?"

"What else?"

"If ye dun't know . . ." He shrugged. "I'll come soon's I'm able."

However ridiculous his rigmarole had been, what he said did disconcert me, largely because there was a wild kind of logic to it. But then, I reflected, as I walked back through the woods to my cousin's home, there is a perverted kind of logic to all superstition, which explains the tenacity of superstitions from one generation to another. Yet there had also been unmistakable fear in Amos Whateley, a fear unaccountable except by superstition, for Whateley was a powerful man who could in all probability have tossed me over the stone fence that separated us, with a heave of one arm. And in Whateley's attitude lay the undeniable germ of something profoundly disturbing, if only I could have access to the key.

3

I COME NOW TO that portion of my account which must remain unfortunately obscure, for I cannot always be sure of the precise order or meaning of the events in which I took part. Disturbed as I was by Whateley's rigmarole of superstitious fear, I went directly back to my cousin's house and turned to the strange old books which constituted his library. I sought some further clue to Whateley's curious beliefs, and yet, I had no sooner picked up one of the books than I was once again filled with the unshakable conviction that this search was futile, for what does it gain a man to read that which he already knows? And what they think who know nothing of these things—what do they matter? For it seemed as if I saw again that strange landscape with its titanic amorphous beings, and it was as if I heard again the chanting of alien names, hinting of terrible power, a chanting accompanied by a fluting of music, and a choral ululation from throats which were not human.

This illusion lasted but momentarily, only long enough to deflect me from my purpose. I abandoned any further examination of my cousin's book, and after a light lunch I made another attempt to pursue my inquiry into my cousin's disappearance, with such lack of success that I gave it up in

mid-afternoon and returned to the house in an indecisive frame of mind, no longer so certain that the men from the sheriff's office had not done all in their power to trace Abel. And, though my resolve was not diminished, I began for the first time to have grave doubts of my ability to carry on.

That night I heard strange voices once again.

Or perhaps I should not say "strange," for I had heard them before; they were unidentifiable and alien, and once again their source was a mystery to me. But that night the whippoorwills were louder than ever before; their cries rang piercingly in the house and in the Pocket outside. The voices began, I should judge at about nine o'clock. It was a cloudy night, with great grey banks pressing close upon the hills and the valley, and the air was moist; its very moisture, however, increased the loudness of the whippoorwills and intensified the strange voices which welled forth suddenly, without preamble, as once before—outré, unintelligible, eldritch—they were all that and more, defying description. And once again there was the effect as of a litany, with the chorus of whippoorwills swelling forth as if in answer to every chanted sentence or phrase, an unbearable cacophony of noise that rose to frightful cataclysms of sound.

For a while I strove to make something out of the alien voices which throbbed in the room, but they were not coherent; they had the sound of gibberish, despite my inmost conviction that, far from gibberish, they were significant and meaning far beyond my ability to grasp. Nor did I any longer much care from whence they came; I knew that they rose from somewhere within the house, but whether by virtue of some natural phenomenon or by some other agency, I could not determine. They were the product of darkness, or—and I could not gainsay the possibility—they might well have arisen in a consciousness deeply disturbed by the demoniac crying of the whippoorwills, making their terrible bedlam on all sides, filling valley and house and mind with nothing but their thunder, piercing and rasping, the constant, shrilling *Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!*

I lay in a state akin to catalepsy, listening:

"Lllllll-nglui, nnnn-lagl, fhtagn-nbah, ai Yog-Sothoth!"

The whippoorwills answered in a rolling crescendo of sound that flowed upon the house, broke against it, invaded it; and in the recession of voices, the echo came back from the hills, crashing upon my consciousness with only slightly diminished force.

"Ygnaiih! Y'bthnk. EEE-ya-ya-ya-yahaaahaahaahaaa!"

And again the explosion of sound, the incessant *Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!* beating upon the night and the cloudy darkness like the throbbing of thousands upon thousands of wild drums!

Mercifully, I lost consciousness.

The human body and mind can tolerate only so much before oblivion comes, and with oblivion that night came a dream-structure of unutterable power and terror. I dreamed I was in a far place, a place of vast monolithic buildings, inhabited not by men, but by beings apart from the wildest imagination of men, a land of great unknown tree ferns, of Calamites and Sigillaria surrounding the fantastic buildings of that place, of fearsome forests of trees and other growths belonging to no known terrestrial place. Here and there rose colossi of black stone, deep in places where perpetual twilight held sway, and in some areas there were basaltic ruins of incredible age. And in such night-held places, the constellations which shone forth resembled no known map of the heavens I had ever seen, nor did the topography of the land in those places bear any resemblances to anything I had known, save only certain artists' conceptions of earth in prehistoric times dating far beyond the Paleozoic period.

Of the beings who inhabited the dream I remember only that they were of no fixed shape, gigantic in size, and possessed of appendages which were in the nature of tentacles, but afforded locomotion as well as the power to grasp and hold objects; and these appendages were capable of being retracted in one place and of coming forth in another. They were the inhabitants of the monolithic buildings, and many of them were inert with sleep, at which they were attended by foetal beings considerably smaller in size, but of related structure in that they too were capable of changing shape. They were of a horrible, fungoid colour, not flesh-coloured at all; in this they resembled the colour of many of the buildings, and at times they appeared to alter horribly in shape, as if in caricature of the curvilinear types of masonry so prevalent in various parts of that dream world.

Strangely, the chanting and the crying of the whippoorwills continued as an integral part of the dream, but in perspective, rising and falling in the background, as in the distance. And it seemed, moreover, as if I, too, existed in that strange place, but on a different plane, as if I, too, served one of the

Great Ones there, going forth into the fearsome darkness of the alien forests to slaughter beasts and open their veins so that the Great Ones might feed and grow in other dimensions but that of their weird world.

How long the dream lasted, I could not say. I slept all night, and yet was tired out of all proportion when I woke, as if I had worked most of the night and got but little sleep. I dragged myself wearily to the kitchen and fried myself some bacon and eggs, after which I sat listlessly to eat them. However, breakfast with several cups of black coffee gave me new life, and I rose from the table feeling refreshed.

While I was outside for wood, the telephone rang. It was Hough's ring, but I hurried in to listen.

I recognized Hester Hutchins' voice at once, having become accustomed to her ever-wagging tongue. "An' they do say es thar was six, seven kilt. The bes' caows in his herd, Mr. Osborn said. They was up in thet south forty—thet's his nearest pasture to Harrop's Pocket. Gawd knows haow many others would o' bin kilt if twa'nt fer the rest o' the herd bustin' down the fence an' gittin' daown to the barn. Thet's haow come Osborn's hired man, Andy Baxter, went up to the pasture with a lantern an' seen 'em. Jest like them Corey caows, an' poor Bert Giles—throats all tore aout, an' them poor beasts beat up suthin' turrible! Gawd knows whut's loose in the Pocket, Vinnie, but suthin's got to be done or we'll all be kilt. I knowed them whippoorwills was a-callin' for somebody's soul, an' they got poor Bert's. They're still a-callin' an' I know whut thet means, an' you do, too, Vinnie Hough—they's to be more souls a-comin' to them whippoorwills afore the moon changes onct more.

"Gawd-a-mercy! I'm goin' straight to Boston, soon's I kin git away."

I knew the sheriff would stop in again that day, and I was ready for him when he came. I had heard nothing. I explained that I had been exhausted the night before but had managed to sleep in spite of the din made by the whippoorwills. In turn, he very considerately told me what had been done to Osborn's cows. Seven of them had been slaughtered, he said, and there was something very strange about it, for no cow had bled very much, despite the way in which each throat was ripped. And, in spite of the bestial manner of the attack, it seemed plain that it had been done by a man, for there were fragmentary footprints in evidence, unfortunately not complete enough to

warrant attempting to make any kind of observation. However, he went on in confidence, one of his men had had his eye on Amos Whateley for some time; Amos had been making very queer remarks, and his actions had been those of a man who expected that he was being followed or something. The sheriff said this wearily for he was tired, having been up since he had been called to Osborn's farm. And what did I know about Whateley? he went on.

I shook my head and confessed that I knew all too little about any of my neighbours. "But I've noticed his queer talk," I admitted. "Whenever I've talked with him, he's said very strange things."

The sheriff leaned forward eagerly. "Did he ever talk or mutter about 'feeding' someone something?"

I admitted that Amos had so talked.

The sheriff seemed satisfied. He took his leave after indirectly scoring me for my own conspicuous lack of success in discovering what had happened to my cousin Abel. I was not unduly surprised at his suspicions of Amos Whateley. And yet there was something in sharp conflict with the sheriff's theory deep in my own awareness, and a kind of uneasiness burgeoned there, like the nagging memory of something left undone.

My exhaustion did not leave me during the day, and I did little work, though I found it necessary to wash some of my clothing which had somehow become rust stained. I took time, too, to examine my cousin's work on the fish-netting, and it occurred to me that he had designed it to catch something. And what more likely than that it was the whippoorwills, which must have driven him, too, to his wits' end now and then? Or perhaps he knew more of their habits than I did, and perhaps he had a better reason to try to catch them than their constant crying.

I slept when I could during that day, though from time to time I listened to the current of frightened talk that went on over the telephone. There was no end to it; the telephone rang all day long, and sometimes the men talked to each other, as well as the women, who had heretofore monopolized the wires. They talked about pooling herds of cows and setting a watch on them, but then, fearful, none wanted to watch alone; they spoke of keeping their cows in the barns at night, and I gathered that they had decided to do this. The women, however, wanted no one to go out after dark for any reason whatsoever.

"It dun't come by day," Emma Whateley insisted to Marie Osborn. "Ain't never bin nuthin' done by day. So I say a body should stay close to hum onct the sun gits down over the hills."

And Lavinia Hough had taken off for Boston, just as she said she would, with the children.

"Up an' took them kids an' let Laban be thar," said Hester Hutchins. "But he ain't alone; he's fetched a man out from Arkham to set with him. Oh, it's a turrible thing, it's a Gawd's punishment on us, an' the wusst is nobody knows whut It looks like nor whar It comes from 'r nuthin'."

And the superstitions about the cows being drained of blood were repeated again.

"They said them caows didn't bleed much, an' that's why—they didn't hev no blood left to bleed," said Angeline Wheeler. "Gawd, whut's a-goin' to happen to us all? We can't jest set here an' wait till we're all kilt."

This frightened conversation was a sort of whistling in the dark; the telephones gave them, men as well as women, a sense of being less isolated, less solitary. That none of them ever called me I did not ponder; I was an outsider, and people from outside are seldom taken into country circles like that of my neighbours around Harrop's Pocket in short of ten years' time—if then. Towards evening I no longer listened on the telephone, being still very tired.

On the next night but one of the voices came again.

And the dream came, too. Once more I was in a vast place of strange basalt buildings and fearsome forest growths. And I knew that in that place I was a Chosen One, proud to serve the Ancient Ones, belonging to that greatest of all, who was like the others and yet unlike them, that one among them who alone could take the form of a congeries of shining globes, the Guardian of the Threshold, the Keeper of the Gate, Great Yog-Sothoth, biding his time to return to his one-time terrestrial plane, where I must continue to serve him. Oh, the wonder and the terror! Oh, the eternal bliss! And I heard the whippoorwills crying, their voices rising and falling in the background of that place, while the chanters cried out under the alien stars, under the alien heavens, into the gulfs and to the shrouded peaks, cried out aloud—

"Llllll-nglui, nnnn-lagl, fhtagn-nbah, ai Yog-Sothoth!"

And I, too, raised my voice in praise of Him, the Lurker at the Threshold . . .

"Llllll-nglui, nnnn-lagl, fhtagn-nbah, ai Yog-Sothoth!"

That is what they say I was screaming when they found me crouching beside the body of poor Amelia Hutchins, tearing at her throat—the helpless woman struck down on her way back along the ridge path from a visit to Abbey Giles. That is what they say I mouthed in my bestial rage, with the whippoorwills all around, crying and screaming in their maddening voices. And that is why they have locked me into this room with the bars at the window. Oh, the fools! The fools! Having failed once with Abel, they grasp at straws. How can they think to keep one of the Chosen Ones from Them? What are bars to Them?

But they are trying to frighten me when they say I have done these things. I never raised my hand against any human being. I have told them how it was, if only they would see. I told them. It was not I, never! No, I know who it was. I think I have always known, and if they look, they will find proof.

It was the whippoorwills, the incessantly calling whippoorwills, the damnable, lurking whippoorwills waiting out there, the whippoorwills, the whippoorwills in the hills . . .



IT IS FORTUNATE that the limitations of the human mind do not often permit viewing in proper perspective all the facts and events upon which it touches. I have thought this many times particularly in regard to the curious circumstances surrounding the disappearance of Jason Wecter, music and art critic of the Boston *Dial*, which took place a year ago and about which many theories were advanced, ranging from a suspicion of murder by some disappointed artist, smarting under Wecter's biting invective, to the belief that Wecter simply took off for parts unknown, without word to anyone, and for a reason known only to himself.

This latter belief comes closer to actuality, perhaps than is commonly supposed, though its acceptance is a matter of terminology, and involves the question of whether or not Wecter's absence was voluntary or involuntary. There is, however, one explanation which offers itself to those who are imaginative enough to grasp it, and the certain circumstances surrounding the event lead, indeed, to no other conclusion. In these circumstances I had a part, not a small one, by any means, though it was not recognized as such even by me until after the fact of Jason Wecter's vanishing.

These events began with the expression of a wish, than which nothing could be more prosaic. Wecter, who lived alone in an old house in King's

Lane, Cambridge, well away from the beaten thoroughfare, was a collector of primitive art work, preferably in wood or stone; he had such things as the strange religious carvings of the Penitentes, the bas-reliefs of the Mayas, the outré sculptures of Clark Ashton Smith, the wooden fetish figures and the carvings of gods and goddesses out of the South Seas islands, and many others; and he had wished for something in wood that might be "different," though the pieces by Smith seemed to me to offer as much variety as anyone could wish. But Smith's were not in wood; Wecter wanted something in wood to balance his collection, and, admittedly, he had nothing in wood save some few masks from Ponape which came close to the strange and wonderful imagery of the Smith sculptures.

I suppose that more than one of his friends was looking for something in wood for Jason Wecter, but it fell to my lot to find it one day in an out-of-the-way second-hand shop in Portland, where I had gone for a holiday—a strange piece indeed, but exquisitely done, a kind of bas-relief of an octopoid creature rising out of a broken monolithic structure in a subaqueous setting. The price of four dollars was extremely reasonable, and the fact that I could not interpret the carving was, if anything, all the more likely to add to its value in Wecter's eyes.

I have described the "creature" as "octopoid," but it was not an octopus. What it was I did not know; its appearance suggested a body much longer than and different from that of an octopus, and its tentacular appendages issued not only from its face, as if from the place where a nose ought to be—much as in the Smith sculpture *Elder God*—but also from its sides and from the central part of its body. The two appendages issuing from its face were clearly prehensile and were carved in an attitude of flaring outward, as if about to grasp, or grasping something. Immediately above these two tentacles were deep-set eyes, carved with uncanny skill, so that the impression was one of vast and disturbing evil. At its base there was carved a line in no known language:

Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.

Of the nature of the wood in which it was carved—a dark brown, almost black wood with a hitherto unfamiliar grain of many whorls—I knew nothing, save that it was unusually heavy for wood. Though it was larger than I had in mind to get for Jason Wecter, I knew that he would like it.

Where had it come from? I asked the phlegmatic little man behind the

cluttered desk. He raised his spectacles to his forehead and said that he could tell me no more than that it had come out of the Atlantic. "Maybe washed off some vessel," he hazarded. It had been brought in with other things but a week or two ago by an old fellow who habitually scavenged along the coast for such pieces among the debris washed up by the sea. I asked what it might represent, but of this the proprietor knew even less than of its source. Jason was therefore free to invent any legend he chose to account for it.

He was delighted with the piece, and especially because he discovered immediately certain startling similarities between it and the stone sculptures by Smith. As an authority on primitive art, he pointed out another factor which made it clear that the proprietor of the shop from which I had obtained it had practically given it to me at four dollars—certain marks which indicated that the piece had been made by tools far older than those of our time, or indeed, of the civilized world as we knew it. These details were but of passing interest to me, of course, since I did not share Wecter's liking for primitives, but I confess to feeling an unaccountable revulsion at Wecter's juxtaposition of this octopoid carving with Smith's work, arising out of unvoiced questions which troubled me—if indeed this thing were centuries old, as Wecter inferred, and represented no known kind of carving previously recognized, how came it that the modern sculptures of Clark Ashton Smith bore such resemblance to it?—and was it not more than a coincidence that Smith's figures created out of the stuff of his weird fiction and poetry should parallel the art of someone removed many hundreds of years in time and leagues in space from him?

But these questions were not asked. Perhaps if they had been, subsequent events might have been altered. Wecter's enthusiasm and delight were accepted as tributes to my judgement and the carving placed on his wide mantel with the best of his wooden pieces; there I was content to leave it, and to forget it.

It was a fortnight before I saw Jason Wecter again, and I would perhaps not have seen him immediately on my return to Boston if it had not been for my attention being called to a particularly savage criticism of a public showing of the sculptures of Oscar Bogdoga, whose work Wecter had given high praise only two months before. Indeed, Wecter's review of his show was of such a nature as to excite the disturbed interest of many mutual friends; it

indicated a new approach to sculpture on Wecter's part, and promised many surprises to those who regularly followed his criticisms. However, one of our mutual acquaintances who was a psychiatrist confessed to some alarm over the curious allusions manifest in Wecter's short but remarkable article.

I read it with mounting surprise, and immediately observed certain distinct departures from Wecter's customary manner. His charge that Bogdoga's work lacked "fire . . . the element of suspense . . . any pretence of spirituality" was usual enough; but the assertions that the artist "evidently had no familiarity with the cult-art of Ahapi or Ahmnoida" and that Bogdoga might have done better than a hybrid imitation of "the Ponape school" were not only inapropos but completely out of character, for Bogdoga was a mid-European whose heavy masses bore far more similarity to those of Epstein than to the work of, for instance, Mestrovic, and certainly none at all to the primitives which were such a delight to Wecter, and which had manifestly now begun to affect his judgement. For Wecter's entire article was studded with strange references to artists no one had even heard of, to places far in space and time, if indeed they were of this earth, and to culture patterns which bore no relation whatever to any at all familiar even to informed readers.

Yet his approach to Bogdoga's art had not been entirely unanticipated, for he had only two days before written a critique of a new symphony by Franz Hoebel given its initial performance by the flamboyant and egocentric Fradelitski, filled with references to "the fluted music of the spheres," and "those piped notes, pre-Druidic in origin, which haunted the aether long before mankind raised an instrument of any kind to hands or lips." At the same time he had hailed a playing, on the same programme, of Harris's *Symphony Number 3,* which he had publicly detested previously, as "a brilliant example of a return to that preprimitive music which haunts the ancestral consciousness of mankind, the music of the Great Old Ones, emerging despite the overlayer of Fradelitski—but then, Fradelitski, having no creative music in him, must of necessity impose upon every work under his baton enough Fradelitski to gratify his ego, no matter how much it may slander the composer."

These two utterly mystifying reviews sent me in haste to Wecter's home, where I found him brooding at his desk with the offending reviews and a sizeable stack of letters—doubtless in protest—before him.

"Ah, Pinckney," he greeted me, "no doubt you too are brought here by these curious reviews of mine."

"Not exactly," I hedged. "Recognizing that any criticism stems from personal opinions, you're at liberty to write what you like, as long as you're sincere. But who the devil are Ahapi and Ahmnoida?"

"I wish I knew."

He spoke so earnestly that I could not doubt his sincerity.

"But I haven't a doubt that they existed," he went on. "Just as the Great Old Ones appear to have some status in ancient lore."

"How did you come to refer to them if you don't know who they are?" I asked.

"I can't entirely explain that, either, Pinckney," he answered, a troubled frown on his face. "But I can try."

Thereupon he launched into a not entirely coherent account of certain things which had happened to him ever since his acquisition of the octopoidal carving I had found in Portland. He had not spent a night free of dreams in which the strange creature of the carving existed, either in the foreground or ever aware on the rim of his dream. He had dreamed of subterrene places and of cities beneath the sea; he had seen himself in the Carolines and in Peru; he had walked by dream under leering gambrel-roofed houses, in legend-haunted Arkham; he had ridden in strange seagoing craft to places beyond the reaches of the known oceans. The carving, he knew, was a miniature, for the creature was a great protoplasmic being, capable of changing shape in myriad ways. Its name, said Wecter, was *Cthulhu;* its domain was *R'lyeh,* an awesome city far under the Atlantic. It was one of the Great Old Ones, who were believed to be reaching from other dimensions and far stars, as well as from the sea's depths and pockets in space for reestablishment of their ancient dominion over earth. It appeared accompanied by amorphous dwarfs, clearly sub-human, which went before it playing strange pipes making music of no known parallel. Apparently the carving, which had been made in very ancient times, very probably before any kind of human record was kept, but after the dawn of mankind, by artisans in the Carolines, was a "point of contact" from the alien dimension inhabited by the beings which sought return.

I confess that I listened with some misgivings, noticing which, Wecter

stopped talking abruptly, rose, and brought the octopoidal carving from the mantel to his desk. He put it down before me.

"Look at that carefully, now, Pinckney. Do you see anything different about it?"

I examined it with care, and announced finally that I could see no alteration.

"It doesn't seem to you that the extended tentacles from the face are—let us put it—'more extended?'"

I said it did not. But even as I spoke I could not be certain. The suggestion is all too often father of the fact. Was there an extension or not? I could not say then; I cannot say now. But plainly Wecter believed that some extension had taken place. I examined the carving anew, and felt again that curious revulsion I had first experienced at noticing the similarity between the sculptures of Smith and this curious piece.

"It doesn't strike you, then, that the ends of the tentacles have lifted and pushed out further?" he pressed.

"I can't say it does."

"Very well." He took the carving and restored it to its place on the mantel.

Coming back to his desk, he said, "I'm afraid you'll think me deranged, Pinckney, but the fact is that ever since I've had this in my study, I've been aware of existing in what I can only describe as dimensions different from those we commonly know, dimensions, in short, such as those I've dreamed about. For instance, I have no memory of having written these reviews; yet they are mine. I find them in my script, in my proofs, in my column. I know, in short, that I and no one else wrote these reviews. I cannot publicly disown them, though I realize very well that they contradict opinions set down over my signature many times before this. Yet it cannot be denied that there is a curiously impressive logic running through them; since reading them—and, incidentally, the indignant letters I have received about them—I have given the matter some study. Contrary to the opinions you may have heard me express previously, the work of Bogdoga *does* have a relationship to a hybrid form of early Carolinian cult-art, and the third *Symphony* of Harris *does* have a marked and disturbing appeal to the primitive, so that one must ask whether their initial offensiveness to traditionally sensitive or cultured peo-

ple is not an instinctive reaction against the primitive which the inner self instantly acknowledges."

He shrugged. "But that's neither here nor there, is it, Pinckney? The fact is that the carving you found in Portland has exercised an irrationally disturbing influence on me to such an extent that I am sometimes not sure whether it has been for the best or not."

"What kind of influence, Jason?"

He smiled strangely. "Let me tell you how I feel it. The first night I was aware of it was that immediately after you left it here. There was a party here that evening, but by midnight the guests were gone, and I was at my typewriter. Now then, I had a prosaic piece to do—something about a little piano recital by one of Fradelitski's pupils, and I got it off in no time at all. But all the time I was aware of that carving. Now, I was aware of it on two planes; the one was that on which it came into my possession, as a gift from you, an object of no great size, and clearly three-dimensional; the other was an extension—or invasion if you like—into a different dimension, in relation to which I existed in this room against the carving as a seed to a pumpkin. In short, when I had finished the brief notice I wrote I had only the odd illusion that the carving had grown to unimaginable proportions; for a cataclysmic instant I felt that it had added concrete being, that it was reared up before me as a colossus against which I stood as a pathetic miniature. This lasted but a moment; then it withdrew. Note that I say it withdrew; it did not just cease to exist; no, it seemed to compress, to draw back, precisely as if it were drawing out of this new dimension to return to its actual state as it must exist before my eyes—but as it need not exist before my psychic perception. This has continued; I assure you, it is not an hallucination, though I see by your expression that you are thinking I've taken leave of my senses."

It was not as bad as that, I hastened to assure him. What he said was either true or it was not; the presumptive evidence, based on the concrete facts of his strange reviews, indicated that he was sincere; therefore, for Jason Wecter, what he said was true. It must therefore have meaning and motivation.

"Postulating that everything you say is true," I said at last, cautiously, "there must be some reason for it. Perhaps you're working too hard, and this is an extension of your own subconscious."

"Good old Pinckney!" he exclaimed, laughing.

"Or, if it is not, it must then have some motivation—from outside."

His smile vanished; his eyes narrowed. "You concede that, do you, Pinckney?"

"Presumptively, yes."

"Good. So I thought after my third experience. Twice I was perfectly willing to lay to sensory illusion; three times, no. The hallucinations experienced as a result of eye-strain are seldom as elaborate as that, tend to be limited to imaginary rats, dots, and the like. So then, if this creature belongs to a cult in that it is the object of worship—and I understand that its worship extends into our own day, though secretly—there seems to be but one explanation. I return to what I said before—that carving is a focal point of contact from another dimension in time or space; granting that, then plainly the creature is attempting to reach through to me."

"How?" I asked bluntly.

"Ah, I am not a mathematician, not a scientist. I am only a music and art critic. That conclusion represents the outside limits of my extra-cultural knowledge."

The hallucination had appeared to persist. Moreover, it had had an existence in his sleeping hours on yet another plane in that, during sleep, Wecter accompanied the creature of the carving without difficulty into other dimensions outside our own space and time. Consistent illusions are not rarities in medical case-histories, nor are those which develop progressively, but such an experience as Jason Wecter's was clearly more than illusory, since it extended insidiously into his very thought patterns. I mused on this for a long time that night, turning over and over in my mind everything he had told me about the Elder Gods, the Great Old Ones, the mythological entities and their worshippers, into the culture pattern of which Wecter's interest had penetrated with such disturbing results for him.

Thereafter I watched the *Dial* apprehensively for Jason Wecter's column.

Because of what he wrote in the intervening ten days before I saw him again, Jason Wecter was soon the talk of cultural Boston and the surrounding countryside. Surprisingly, by no means all the talk about him was condemnatory, though the expected points-of-view were present; that is, those who had supported him previously were outraged and now condemned him; those who had previously scorned him now supported him. But his judge-

ments of concerts and art shows, though completely awry to my eyes, were no less razor-sharp; all his customary incisiveness and invective were present, his keenness of perception seemed not altered save in that he perceived things now, as it were, from a different perspective, a perspective radically altered from his past point-of-view. His opinions were startling and often outrageous.

The magnificent and ageing prima donna, Madame Bursa-DeKoyer, was "a towering monument to bourgeois taste, which, unfortunately, is not buried under it."

Corydon de Neuvalet, the rage of New York, was "at best an amusing imposter, whose Surrealistic sacrileges are displayed in Fifth Avenue shop windows by shopkeepers whose knowledge of art is somewhat less than an amount necessary to be seen under a microscope, though in his sense of colour he is tenth-best Vermeer, even though he never challenges even the least of Ahapi."

The paintings of the insane artist Veilain excited his extravagant admiration. "Here is evidence that someone who can hold a brush and who knows colour when he sees it can see more in the world around him than most of the benighted who look upon his canvases. Here is genuine perception, uninhibited by any terrestrial dimensions, unhampered by any mass of human tradition, sentimental or otherwise. The appeal is to a plane which stems from the primitive, yet rises above it; the background is in events of the past and present which exist in conterminous folds of space and are visible only to those gifted with extra-sensory perception, which is perhaps a property of certain people adjudged 'insane.'"

Of a concert by Fradelitski of the conductor's current favourite, the Russian symphonist, Blantanovich, he wrote so scathingly that Fradelitski publicly threatened suit. "Blantanovich's music is an expression of that dreadful culture which supposes that every man is the precise political equal of every other, save those who are at the top, who are, to quote Orwell, 'more equal;' it need not be played at all and would not be if it were not for Fradelitski, who is distinguished indeed among conductors, for in the entire world, he is the only one who learns progressively less with each concert he conducts."

It was not to be wondered at that Jason Wecter's name was on every tongue; he was inveighed against; the *Dial* could not begin to publish the let-

ters received; he was praised, complimented, damned, cast out from social circles to which he had hitherto always had invitation; but above all, he was talked about, and whether on one day he was called a Communist and on the other a die-hard reactionary seemed to make no difference to him, for he was seldom seen anywhere but at the concerts he had to attend, and there he spoke to no one. Yet, he was seen at one other place: at the Widener, and later it was reported that he had twice been seen in the rare book collection of Miskatonic University at Arkham.

Such was the situation when, on the night of August twelfth, two days before his disappearance, Jason Wecter came to my apartment in a state which I should have judged at best to have been one of temporary derangement. His look was wild, and his talk even more so. The hour was close to midnight, but the night was warm; there had been a concert, and he had heard half of it, after which he had gone home to study in certain books he had managed to take from the Widener. From there he had come by taxi to my apartment, bursting in on me as I was getting ready for bed.

"Pinckney! Thank heaven you're here! I telephoned, but couldn't get an answer."

"I just came in. Take it easy, Jason. There's a scotch and soda over on the table; help yourself."

He bolted a glass with far more scotch than soda in it. He was shaking, not just in his hands, and his eyes were feverish, I thought. I crossed and put a hand to his forehead, but he brushed it brusquely away.

"No, no, I'm not sick. You remember that conversation we had—about the carving?"

"Quite clearly."

"Well, it's true, Pinckney. It's all true. I could tell you things—about what happened at Innsmouth when the government took over that time in 1928 and all those explosions took place out at Devil Reef; about what happened in Limehouse, London, back in 1911; about the disappearance of Professor Shrewsbury over in Arkham not so very many years ago—there are still pockets of secret worship right here in Massachusetts, I know, and they are all over the world."

"Dream or reality?" I asked sharply.

"Oh, this is reality. I wish it were not. But I have had dreams. Oh, what dreams! I tell you, Pinckney, they are enough to drive a man mad with ec-

stasy to wake to this mundane world and to know that such outer worlds exist! Oh, those gigantic buildings! Those colossi towering there into those alien skies! And Great Cthulhu! Oh, the wonder and beauty of it! Oh, the terror and evil! Oh, the inevitability!"

I went over and shook him, hard.

He took a deep breath and sat for a moment with his eyes closed. Then he said, "You don't believe me, do you, Pinckney?"

"I'm listening. Belief isn't important, is it?"

"I want you to do something for me."

"What is it?"

"If something happens to me, get hold of that carving—you know the one—and take it out somewhere, weight it, and drop it into the sea. Preferably—if you can make it—off Innsmouth."

"Look, Jason, has someone threatened you?"

"No, no. Will you promise?"

"Of course."

"No matter what you may hear or see or think you hear or see?"

"If you wish."

"Yes. Send it back; it must go back."

"But tell me, Jason—I know you've been pretty cutting in your notices during the past week or so—if anyone's taken it into his head to get back at you . . ."

"Don't be ridiculous, Pinckney. It's nothing like that. I told you you wouldn't believe me. It's the carving—it's reaching farther and farther into this dimension. Can't you understand, Pinckney? It's begun to materialize. Two nights ago was the first time—*I felt its tentacle!*"

I withheld comment and waited.

"I tell you, I woke from sleep and felt its cold, wet tentacle pulling away the bedclothes; I felt it against my body—I sleep, you know, without any covering but the bedding. I leapt up, I put on the light—and there it was, real, something I could see as well as feel, withdrawing now, diminishing in size, dissolving, fading—and then it was gone, back into its own dimension. In addition to that, for the past week or so I've been able to hear things from that dimension—that fluted music, for instance, and a weird whistling sound."

At that moment I was convinced that my friend's mind had cracked. "If the carving has that effect on you, why don't you destroy it?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Never. That's my only contact with outside, and I assure you, Pinckney, it's not all dark over there. Evil exists on many planes, you know."

"If you believe, aren't you afraid, Jason?"

He leaned towards me with his glittering eyes fixed on mine. "Yes," he breathed. "Yes, I'm horribly afraid—but I'm fascinated, too. Can you understand? I've heard music from outside; I've seen things over there—beside them everything in this world of ours palls and fades. Yes, I'm horribly afraid, Pinckney, but I will not willingly allow my fear to stand between us."

"Between you and who else?"

"Cthulhu!" he whispered.

At this moment he raised his head, his eyes far off. "Listen!" he said softly. "Do you hear it, Pinckney? The music! Oh, that wonderful music! Oh, Great Cthulhu!" And he rose and ran from my apartment, an expression of almost beatific bliss on his ascetic features.

That was my last sight of Jason Wecter.

Or was it?

Jason Wecter disappeared on the second day thereafter, or during the night of that day. He was seen by others, though not to talk to, since his visit to my apartment, but he was not seen later than the following night, when a neighbour, coming in late, saw him by the light of his study window, apparently working at his typewriter, though there was no trace of any manuscript to be found, nor had anything been mailed to the *Dial* for publication in his column in that paper.

His instructions in case of any untoward accident clearly called for my "ownership" of the carving described in detail as that of a "Sea God: Ponape Origin"—quite as if he had wished to conceal the identity of the creature depicted there; so presently, with the sanction of the police, I repossessed my property, and prepared to do with it as I had promised Wecter I would do, though not before I aided the police in substantiating their deduction that none of Wecter's clothing was missing, that he had apparently risen from his bed and vanished stark naked.

I did not particularly examine the carving when I removed it from Wecter's house, but simply put it into my capacious brief-case and carried it home, having already made arrangements to drive to the vicinity of Innsmouth on the following day and throw the object, duly weighted, into the sea.

That was why it was not until the last moment that I saw the revolting change which had taken place. It should be borne in mind that I did not actually see anything in the process of its taking place. But there is no gainsaying the fact that I did on at least two occasions previously carefully examine the carving in question, and one of those times was at the special behest of Jason Wecter to observe fancied alterations which I could not see. And what I did see I must confess to seeing in a rocking launch, while I heard a sound which can only be described as of someone's voice calling my name as from an unfathomable distance, far far away, a voice like that of Jason Wecter, unless the excitement of that moment served to derange my own sense.

It was when I took the already weighted carving out of my brief-case, sitting far out to sea off Innsmouth in the launch I had borrowed, that I was first aware of that distant and incredible sound which resembled a voice calling my name, and which seemed to come from below me, rather than from above. And it was this, I am certain, which halted my action long enough for me to look once again, however fleetingly, at the object in my hands before it was flung forth to sink out of sight beneath the gently rolling waters of the Atlantic. But I have no doubt about what I saw, none whatsoever. *For I held the carving in such a manner that I could not miss the out-flared tentacles of the thing portrayed by that unknown, ancient artist, could not miss seeing that in one of the hitherto empty tentacles there was now clasped the tiny, unclothed figure, perfect in every detail, of a man, whose ascetic features were unmistakably familiar, a miniature of a man which existed in relation to the figure on the carving, in Jason Wecter's own words, recurring with horrible finality there in that boat, "as a seed to a pumpkin!" And even as I flung it forth, it seemed to me that the lips of that miniature man moved in the syllables of my name, and, as it struck the water, and sank below, I seemed to hear that far-away voice like the voice of Jason Wecter, drown my name, horribly gasping and gurgling, with but one syllable enunciated and the other lapped up in the fathomless water off Devil Reef!*



THE SANDWIN COMPACT

I KNOW NOW THAT THE strange and terrible happenings at Sandwin House had their beginnings much farther back than any of us then imagined, certainly farther back than Eldon or I thought at that time. Manifestly, there was no reason to suppose in those early weeks during which Asa Sandwin's time was running out that his trouble grew out of something in a past so remote as to be beyond our comprehension. It was only towards the end of the affair at Sandwin House that terrible glimpses were afforded us, hints of something frightful and awful behind the commonplace events of everyday life broke through to the surface, and ultimately we were enabled to grasp briefly the heart of what lay beneath.

Sandwin House had originally been called Sandwin-by-the-Sea, but its later appellation had soon come to be far more convenient in use. It was an old-fashioned house, old as such houses were old in New England, standing along the Innsmouth road not too far from Arkham: of two stories and an attic, with a deep basement. The roof was many-gabled, with dormer windows rising from the attic. Before the house old elms and maples stood; behind, only a hedge of lilac separated the lawns from the sharp descent to the sea, for the house stood on a high point of land somewhat removed from the highway itself. In appearance it might have seemed a little cold to the casual

passerby, but to me it had always been coloured by memories of childhood vacations spent there with my cousin Eldon; it represented relief from Boston, escape from the crowded city. Until the curious happenings that began in the late winter of 1938, I retained my early impression of Sandwin House; even so, it was not until after that strange winter's end that I became aware of how subtly but certainly Sandwin House had changed from the haven of childhood summers to a malign harbour for incredible evil.

My introduction to those curiously disturbing events was prosaic enough; it came in the shape of a telephone call from Eldon as I was about to sit down to supper with my fellow librarians of Arkham's Miskatonic University in the small club of which we were members. I took the call in the club's lounging room.

"Dave? This is Eldon. I want you to run up for a few days."

"Too busy, I'm afraid," I replied. "I'll try to make it next week."

"No, no—now. Dave—the owls are hooting."

That was all; there was nothing more. I returned to the heated discussion in which I had been engaged when I was summoned to the telephone and had actually picked up the threads of that discussion once more when what my cousin had said effected the necessary bridge into the years past, and instantly I excused myself and left for my rooms to prepare for the journey to Sandwin House. Long ago, almost three decades ago, in those carefree days of childhood play, there had been established between us a certain agreement; if ever one of us uttered a certain cryptic sentence, it was to be interpreted as a cry for assistance. To this we pledged ourselves. That cryptic sentence was: *The owls are hooting!* And my cousin Eldon had spoken it.

Within an hour I had arranged for a substitute to take my place in the library of Miskatonic and was on my way to Sandwin House, driving faster than the law permitted. Candidly, I was half amused, half frightened; the pledge as we had made it in those days was serious enough, but it was, after all, a fancy of childhood; that Eldon had seen fit to utter now that cryptic sentence seemed to me evidence of something seriously disturbing in his existence; it seemed to me now rather the last appeal of dire distress than any casual harking back to childhood.

The night descended before I reached Sandwin House; a chill night with frost. A light snow still covered the ground, but the highway was clear. The last few miles to Sandwin House lay along the ocean, so that the drive

was singularly beautiful: the moonlight making a wide path of yellow on the sea, and the wind rippling the water so that the entire bosom of the sea sparkled and gleamed as with some inner light. Trees, buildings, hill-slopes broke into the eastern horizon line from time to time, but lessened the sea's beauty not at all. And presently the large ungainly structure that was Sandwin House broke into the skyline.

Sandwin House was dark save for a thin line of light well towards the rear. Here Eldon lived alone with his father and an old servant, though a country woman or two came regularly to clean the place once or twice a week. I drove the car around to one side where an old barn served as a garage, put the car away, took my bag and made my way to the house.

Eldon had heard me. I encountered him in the darkness just beyond the door, his long face touched a little with moonlight, his dressing-gown held closely to his thin body.

"I knew I could count on you, Dave," he said, taking my bag.

"What's up, Eldon?"

"Oh, don't say anything," he said nervously, as if someone might hear. "Wait. I'll tell you in time. And be quiet; let's not disturb father for the time being."

He led the way into the house, going with extreme care down the wide hall towards the stairs, behind which his own rooms were. I could not help noticing the unnatural quiet of the house and the sound of the sea beyond; it struck me then that the atmosphere was faintly eerie, but I shrugged away this feeling.

In the light of his room, I saw that my cousin was seriously upset, despite a false air of healthy welcome; my coming was clearly not an end, but only an incident. He was haggard, his eyes were dark and red-rimmed, as if he had not slept for some days, and his hands moved constantly in that excess of nervousness so common to neurotics.

"Now then, sit down; make yourself at home. You've had supper, eh?"

"Enough," I assured him, and waited for him to unburden himself.

He took a turn or two about the room, opened the door cautiously and looked out, before he came back to sit down beside me. "Well, it's about father," he began without preamble. "You know how we have always lived without any visible income, and yet always seemed to have money. That's

been for several generations in the Sandwin line, and I've never bothered my head about it. Last fall, however, money was running very low. Father said he needed to go on a journey, and he went. Father seldom travels, but I remembered then that the last time he travelled, almost ten years ago, we were also in dire straits. But when he came back, there seemed again to be plenty of money. I never saw my father leave the house, and I never saw him come back; one day he was gone; another, he was back. It happened the same way this time—and after he was back, there seemed again to be plenty of money available for our use." He shook his head, perplexed. "I confess to you that for some time thereafter I looked through the *Transcript* with utmost care on the lookout for some notice of robbery; but there was none."

"Some business, perhaps," I murmured.

He shook his head. "But that isn't what worries me now. I could forget that if it weren't for the fact that it seems to have some connections with father's present condition."

"Is he ill, then?"

"Why—yes and no. He isn't himself."

"What do you mean?"

"He isn't the father I knew. I can hardly explain myself, and, naturally, I'm upset. I was aware of this for the first time when I learned he had returned and, pausing outside the door of his rooms, heard him talking to himself in a low, guttural voice. 'I've tricked them,' he said to himself several times. There was more, of course, but at the moment I did not listen. I knocked on the door, whereupon he called out harshly and ordered me to return to my quarters until the following day. Since that time he has been behaving with increasing queerness, and of late he has seemed to me definitely afraid of something or someone—I don't know which. And some unusual things have begun to take place."

"What things?" I asked bluntly.

"Well, to begin with—the wet door-knobs."

"Wet door-knobs!" I exclaimed.

He nodded gravely. "The first time father saw them, he had old Ambrose and me on the carpet demanding to know which of us had gone through the house with wet hands. Of course neither of us had; he dismissed us abruptly, and there was an end to that. But from time to time a

door-knob or two would show up wet, and father began to be afraid of finding them so, developing a kind of apprehension I couldn't mistake for something else."

"Go on."

"Then there are, of course, the footsteps and the music. They seem to sound from the air, or from the earth—frankly, I don't know which. But there is something here I don't understand, and something of which father is frankly afraid; so that he keeps more and more to his rooms; he doesn't come out sometimes for days, and when he does, walks with the air of a man momentarily expecting some enemy to pounce upon him, with his eyes for every stray shadow and movement, and no great concern for Ambrose or me or the women who come to clean—though he has not permitted any of these women in his rooms, preferring to keep them clean himself."

What my cousin had said distressed me not so much for my uncle's sake as for his own; indeed, at the conclusion of his narrative, he was almost painfully upset, and I could neither treat what he had told me with the levity I had the impulse to do, nor with the gravity he seemed to think it merited. I preserved, accordingly, an interested impartiality.

"I suppose Uncle Asa is still up," I said. "He'll be surprised to find me here, and you won't want him to know you've sent for me. So I rather think we'd better go on up now."

My Uncle Asa was in every respect his son's opposite; while Eldon tended to be tall and thin, Asa was squat and heavy, not so much fat as muscular, with a short, thick neck, and a curiously repellant face. He had scarcely any forehead; thick, black hair grew only an inch above his bushy eyebrows, and a fringe of beard ran along his jaw from one ear to the other, though he wore no moustache. His nose was small, almost non-existent, in contrast to eyes so abnormally large that a first glance from them invariably startled any beholder. In addition to the unnatural size of his eyes, their prominence was augmented by thick-lensed spectacles which he wore, for in later years his eyes had grown progressively weaker and he found it necessary to consult an oculist every six months. His mouth, finally, was singularly wide and thin; it was not gross or thick-lipped, as one might have supposed it would be in one so squat and heavy, but its width was astonishing, for it was no less than five inches across, so that, what with the thick shortness of his neck and his deceptive fringe of beard, it was as if the line of the mouth divided his head

from his torso. He had a strangely batrachian appearance and already in our childhood we had nicknamed him *The Frog*, because at that time he bore a facial resemblance to the creatures Eldon and I often caught in the meadows and swamp across the highway inland from Sandwin House.

At the moment of our entrance to his upstairs study, Uncle Asa was bent over his desk, hunched in that aspect so natural to see. He turned at once, his eyes narrowed, his mouth partly opened; but almost instantly the aspect of sudden fear was gone, he smiled affably, and shuffled away from his desk towards me, one hand outstretched.

"Ah, good evening, David. I had thought to see you before Easter."

"I found I could get away," I replied. "So I came. Besides, I hear little from you and Eldon."

The old man flashed a quick glance at Eldon, and I could not help thinking that while my cousin looked older than he was, my uncle certainly looked less than the sixty-odd years that were his. He put out chairs for us and immediately engaged me in conversation about foreign affairs, a subject upon which I found him astonishingly well informed. The easy informality of his manner did much to offset the impression I had received from Eldon; indeed, I was well on the way to thinking that some grave mental illness had taken possession of Eldon, when I received confirmation of my cousin's suspicions. In the middle of a sentence about the problem of European minorities, my uncle suddenly broke off with his head cocked a little to one side, as if he were listening for something, and an expression of mingled fear and defiance crossed his face. He seemed to have forgotten about us entirely, so complete was his absorption.

For almost three minutes he sat in this manner, while neither Eldon nor I made any move whatever beyond turning our heads a little in an effort to hear what he heard. At the moment, however, there was no telling to what he listened; the wind outside had risen, and the voice of the sea murmured and thundered along the shore; beyond this rose the sound of some nocturnal bird, an uncanny ululation with which I was not familiar; and above us, in the attic of the old house, a kind of rustling was constant, as if the wind were crying through an aperture somewhere into the room.

For the duration of those three minutes, then, no one of us made a move, no one spoke; then abruptly my uncle's face was contorted with rage; he leaped to his feet and ran to the one open window on the east, closing the

window with such violence that I thought the glass must surely break. But it did not. For a moment he stood there mumbling to himself; then he turned and hurried back to us, his features as calm and affable as ever.

"Well, goodnight, my boy. I have much work to do. Make yourself at home here, as always."

He shook hands again, a little ceremoniously, and we were dismissed.

Eldon said nothing until we reached his own rooms once more. Then I saw that he was trembling. He sat down weakly and held his head in his hands, murmuring, "You see! I told you how it was. And that's nothing."

"Well, I don't think you need worry about it," I assured him. "In the first place, I am familiar with any number of people who continue to work in their minds while carrying on conversations, and suddenly cease talking when ideas hit them with force. As to the episode of the window—I confess I cannot attempt to explain it, but—"

"Oh, it wasn't my father," said Eldon suddenly. "It was the cry, the call from outside, that ululation."

"I thought—a bird," I answered lamely.

"There's no bird that makes a sound like that; and the migration hasn't begun except for robins and bluebirds and killdeers. It was that; I tell you, Dave—*whatever it is that makes that sound speaks to father!*"

For a few moments I was too surprised to answer, not alone because of my cousin's sincerity, but because I could not deny that Uncle Asa had indeed conducted himself as if someone had spoken to him. I got up and took a turn about the room, glancing at Eldon from time to time; but it was evident that my cousin needed no belief of mine to confirm his own; so I sat down near him again.

"If we assume that such is the case, Eldon, what is it that talks to your father?"

"I don't know. I heard it first about a month ago. That time father seemed very frightened; not long after, I heard it again. I tried to find out where it came from, but I could learn nothing; that second time it seemed to come from the sea, as it did tonight; subsequently I was positive it came from above the house, and once I could take oath it came from beneath the building. Shortly after that first time, I heard music—weird music, beautiful, but evil. I thought I had dreamed it, because it induced in me strange, fantastic dreams—dreams of some place far from earth and yet linked to

earth by some demonic chain—I can't describe them with any degree of justice at all. At about the same time I was conscious of the sound of footsteps, and I swear to you that they came from somewhere in the air, though on a similar occasion I felt them beneath—not a man's steps, but something larger making them. It is at approximately these times that we find wet doorknobs, and the whole house gives off a strange fish-like odour that seems strongest just outside my father's rooms."

In any ordinary case, I would have dismissed what Eldon had said as the result of some illness unknown to him as well as to me, but to tell the truth, one or two things he had said stirred to life chords of memory which had only begun to bridge the abyss between the prosaic present and that past time in which I had become familiar with certain aspects of life on the dark side, so to speak. So I said nothing, trying to think of what it might be I sought in the channels of my memory, but failing, though I recognized the connection between Eldon's narrative and certain ghastly and forbidden accounts hidden in the library at Miskatonic University.

"You don't believe me," he accused suddenly.

"I neither believe nor disbelieve for the present," I replied quietly. "Let's sleep upon it."

"But you *must* believe me, Dave! The only alternative I have is my own madness."

"It isn't so much a matter of belief as it is some reason for the existence of these things. We shall see. Before we go to bed, tell me one thing: do you know whether you alone are affected by these things, or does Ambrose experience them, too?"

Eldon nodded quickly. "Of course he does; he's wanted to leave, but we've been able to dissuade him so far."

"Then you needn't fear for your sanity," I assured him. "Now, then, for bed."

My room, as always when I stayed in the house, adjoined Eldon's. I bade my cousin goodnight and walked down the hall in the darkness, entering my room with some anxiety about Eldon occupying my thoughts. It was this anxiety which accounted for my slow reaction to the fact that my hand was wet; I noticed this at the moment I reached up to take off my coat. I stood for a moment staring at my gleaming hand before I remembered Eldon's story; then I went at once to the door and opened it. Yes, the outer door-

knob was wet; not only was it wet but it gave off a strong smell of aquatic life, that same fish-like odour of which Eldon had only just a few moments past spoken. I closed the door and wiped my hand, puzzled. Could it be that someone in the house was deliberately plotting against Eldon's sanity? Surely not, for Ambrose had nothing to gain by such a course, and so far as I had been able to ascertain over the years, there was no animosity whatever between my Uncle Asa and Eldon. There was no one else who might be guilty of such a campaign of fright.

I got into bed, troubled still, and trying to bridge the distance between the past and present. What was it happened at Innsmouth almost ten years ago now? What was it lay in those shunned manuscripts and books in Miskatonic University? That I must see them, I knew; so I resolved to return to Arkham as soon as possible. Still trying to search my memory for some clue to the solution of the night's events, I fell asleep.

I hesitate to chronicle what took place shortly after I slept. The human mind is unreliable enough at best, let alone in sleep or just after, when the mental processes are clogged by sluggishness resulting from sleep. But in the light of subsequent events, the dream of that night takes on a clarity and reality which I would have thought possible of nothing in the strange half-world of sleep. For I dreamed; I dreamed almost immediately of a great vast plateau in a strange, sandy world, which bore some resemblance to the high plateaux of Tibet or the Honan country I had once visited. In this place the wind blew eternally, and singularly beautiful music fell upon my ears. And yet that music was not pure, not free of evil, for always there was an undercurrent of sinister notes, like a tangible warning of tribulation to come, like the grim fate notes of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. The music emanated from a group of buildings on an island in a black lake. There all was still; figures stood unmoving, strange-faced beings in the guise of men, some curious hybrid Chinese standing as if on guard.

Throughout this dream it seemed as if I moved with the wind high above, a wind that never ceased. How long I was there, I could not say, for I dreamed endlessly; presently I was away from this place, I looked down from high above the sea upon another island where stood great buildings and idols, where again were strange beings, few of them in the guise of men, and again that deathless music sounded. But here also was something more: the voice of that thing which had but recently in time talked to my Uncle Asa—

that same weird ululation emanating from deep within a squat building whose cellars must certainly have been inundated by the sea. For only a brief time I looked upon this island, while from somewhere within me I knew its modern name: Easter Island—then I was gone, held above the frozen fastnesses of the far north, looking down upon a secret Indian village where natives worshipped before idols of snow. Everywhere was wind, everywhere music and the sound of that whistling voice like a prologue to terror, a warning of incredible and awful evil soon to flower, everywhere the voice of primeval horror shrouded and hidden beneath beautiful unearthly music.

I woke soon after, unbearably tired, and lay with eyes open staring into the darkness. Slowly I emerged from somnolence, and slowly I became conscious that the air in my room was heavy, laden with the fish-like odour of which Eldon had spoken; and at the same time I was aware of two other things—the sound of retreating footsteps, and the fading ululation I had heard not only in my dreams but in my uncle's rooms only a few hours ago. I jumped from bed and ran to the window, looking eastward; but there was nothing to be known save that the sounds seemed certainly to emanate from the vast ocean beyond. I crossed my room again and went out into the hall; where the smell of aquatic life was much stronger than it was in my room. I knocked gently on Eldon's door and, receiving no answer, entered the room.

He lay on his back, his arms flung out and his fingers working. That he still slept was evident, though at first I was deceived by the whispered words coming from his lips. In the act of awaking him, I paused, hand outstretched, and listened. His voice was for the most part too low in pitch to carry well, but I did catch several words spoken apparently with greater effort to be clear: *Lloigor—Ithaqua—Cthulhu;* these words were repeated several times before I caught hold of Eldon's shoulders and shook him. His awakening was not swift, as it should have been, but sluggish, uncertain; only after a full minute did he become aware of me, but from the moment of that recognition he was his usual self, he sat up, conscious at the same time of the odour in the room, and the sounds beyond.

"Ah—you see!" he said gravely, as if this were all the confirmation I now needed.

He got out of bed and went over to the windows, standing there to look out.

"Did you dream?" I asked.

"Yes, and you?"

We had had substantially the same dreams. Throughout his narrative about his dreams, I became conscious of movement on the floor above: furtive, sluggish movement, carrying with it sounds as of *something wet* sloshing across the floor. At the same time the ululation beyond the house faded away, and the sound of footsteps, too, came to a stop. But there was now present in the atmosphere of the old house such an air of menace and horror, that the cessation of these sounds contributed little to our peace of mind.

"Let's go up and talk to your father," I suggested abruptly.

His eyes widened. "Oh, no—we won't dare disturb him; he's given orders."

But I was not to be daunted; I turned alone and went up the stairs, where I paused to knock peremptorily on Uncle Asa's door. There was no reply. I came to my knees and looked into the room through the keyhole, but I could see nothing; all was dark. But someone was there, for voices came out occasionally; the one was clearly Uncle Asa's—but strangely guttural and rasping, as if it had undergone some vital change; the other was like nothing I had ever heard before or since—a deep, throaty sound, a croaking, harsh voice, sombre with menace. And while my uncle spoke in intelligible English, his visitor quite evidently did not. I set myself to listen, and heard first my uncle's voice.

"I will not!"

The unreal accents of the thing in the rooms with him sounded beyond the door. *"Iä! Iä! Shub-Niggurath!"* There followed a succession of rapid mouthings, as if in violent anger.

"Cthulhu will not take me into the sea; I have closed the passage."

Violence again answered my uncle, who seemed, however, to remain unafraid, despite the significant change in the calibre of his voice.

"Nor Ithaqua come in the wind: I can foil him, too."

My uncle's visitor spat a single word: *"Lloigor!"* and there was no reply from my uncle.

I was conscious of a subtle undercurrent of terror, quite apart from the atmosphere of menace that pervaded the old house; this was because I had recognized in my uncle's speech the same words spoken but a few moments ago by Eldon in his sleep, and understood that some malign influence was at

work in the house. Moreover, there began to drift back into my mind certain memories of strange narratives brought back across the years from a time when I had delved into the forbidden texts at Miskatonic University: weird, incredible tales of Ancient Gods, of evil beings older than man; I began to dwell upon the terrible secrets concealed in the Pnakotic Manuscripts, in the *R'lyeh Text*, those vague, suggestive stories of creatures too horrible to contemplate in the prosaic existence of today. I attempted to shake myself free of the cloud of fear that insidiously overcame me, but there was that in the atmosphere of the house to make this impossible. Fortunately, the arrival of my cousin Eldon did what I myself could not do.

He had crept up the stairs behind me and now stood waiting for some move on my part. I motioned him forward and told him what I had heard. Then we bent to listen together. There was no longer the sound of conversation, but only a sullen, unintelligible muttering accompanied by the growing sound of footsteps, or rather, of sounds which, by their spacing, might have been footsteps, but were made not by any creature familiar to my ears by its sound, but by something which seemed at every step to be walking into a bog; now there was, too, a faint inner trembling in the old house, a strange, unnatural shuddering, which neither decreased nor increased, but continued until the sound of footsteps ceased, fading into the distance.

During all this time no sound had escaped us, but when the footsteps crossed the room behind the door and *went on into space beyond the house,* Eldon caught his breath and held it until I could hear the blood pounding in his temples bent close to mine.

"Good God!" he burst out at last. "What is it?"

I did not trust myself to answer, but had begun to turn slightly to make some kind of reply, when the door opened with a suddenness that left us both speechless.

My Uncle Asa stood there; from behind him on all sides came an overpowering smell, as of fish or frogs, a thick miasmic odour of stagnant water so powerful that it brought me close to nausea.

"I heard you," my uncle said slowly. "Come in."

He stepped aside, and we entered his room, Eldon still somewhat reluctant. The windows in the opposite wall were wide open. At first the dim light disclosed nothing, for it was itself as if shrouded in fog, but presently it was evident that something *wet* had been in the room, something that gave

off a heavy vapour, for walls, floors, furniture—all were covered with a heavy dew, and here and there on the floor stood pools of water. My uncle did not appear to notice, or, accustomed to it, had forgotten about it; he sat down in his arm-chair and looked at us, motioning us to seats before him. The vapour had begun almost imperceptibly to lift and Uncle Asa's face grew clearer to my eyes—his squat head even deeper in his body now, his forehead gone entirely, his eyes half closed, so that his resemblance to the frogs of our childhood days was marked: a grotesque caricature, horrible in its implications. With only the slightest hesitation, we sat down.

"Did you hear anything?" he asked. But without waiting for an answer, he went on. "I suppose you did. I have thought for some time I must tell you, and now—there may be little enough time left.

"But I may deceive them yet, I may escape them . . ."

He opened his eyes and looked at Eldon; he did not seem to see me at all. Eldon leaned forward a little anxiously, for it was evident that something troubled the old man; he was not himself, he seemed only half present, with his mind still wandering in some far place.

"The Sandwin compact must end," he said in a guttural voice not unlike that I had heard in the room. "You will remember that. Let no other Sandwin be in bondage to those creatures. Did you ever wonder where our income came from, Eldon?" he asked suddenly.

"Why, yes—often," Eldon managed to reply.

"And it's been that way for three generations; my grandfather and my father before me. My grandfather signed my father away, and my father signed me away—but I shall not sign you away, never fear. This must be its end. So they will not allow me to go naturally as they did grandfather and father, they will take me before instead of waiting. But you will be free of them, Eldon, you will be free."

"Father, what is it? What's the matter?"

He did not appear to hear. "Make no compact with them, Eldon; shun them, avoid them. Evil is their heritage, such evil as you cannot know. These are things you are better without knowing."

"Who was here, Father?"

"Their servant; he did not frighten me. Nor of Cthulhu am I afraid, nor Ithaqua, with whom I have ridden high over the face of the earth, over Egypt and Samarkand, over the great white silences, over Hawaii and the Pacific—

but Lloigor, who can draw the body from the earth piecemeal, Lloigor with his twin brother, Zhar, and the horrible Tcho-Tcho people who tend them in the high plateaux of Tibet—of him . . ." He paused abruptly and shuddered. "They have threatened me with his coming." He took a deep breath. "Let him come, then."

My cousin said nothing, but looked his distress.

"What is this compact, Uncle Asa?" I asked.

"And you will remember," he went on, oblivious to my question, "how your grandfather's coffin was kept shut, and how light it was. There's nothing in his grave, only the coffin; and in your great-grandfather's, too. They took them, they have them, somewhere they have given them unnatural life, a soulless life—for nothing more than our sustenance, the small income we have had and the knowledge they gave us of their hideous secrets. It began, I think, in Innsmouth—my grandfather met someone there, someone who like him *belonged* to those creatures who came up, frog-like, out of the sea." He shrugged and glanced once briefly towards the windows on the east, where now fog glowed whitely and the sound of the sea rose distantly, the long roll and murmur of water.

My cousin was about to break the silence that had fallen with another question, when Uncle Asa turned once more to us and said briefly, curtly, "Enough now. Leave me."

Eldon protested, but my uncle was adamant. By this time I needed little further enlightenment; the stories I had heard about Innsmouth, the Tuttle affair on the Aylesbury road, the strange knowledge concealed in those shunned texts at Miskatonic University—the Pnakotic Manuscripts, the *Book of Eibon,* the *R'lyeh Text*—and, darkest of all, the dread *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred: all these things revived long-forgotten memories of potent evil Ancient Ones, elder beings of incredible age, old gods who once inhabited not only earth but the entire universe, who were divided between forces of ancient good and forces of ancient evil, of which the latter, now in leash, were yet greater in number if not in power. Most ancient of all, the Elder Gods, the forces of good were nameless; but weird and terrible names identified the others—Cthulhu, leader of the elemental water powers; Hastur, Ithaqua, Lloigor, who led the forces of air; Yog-Sothoth and Tsathoggua of earth. It was now apparent to me that three generations of Sandwins had made a hideous compact with these beings, a compact that promised

surrender of soul and body in return for the great knowledge and security in the natural life of the Sandwins: but the most ghastly aspect of this compact was the obvious indication that each generation swore away the succeeding generation. My Uncle Asa had at last rebelled, and he now awaited the consequences.

Once more in the hall, Eldon put a hand on my arm and said, "I don't understand."

I shook his arm off almost roughly. "Nor I, Eldon; but I've some idea, and I want to get back to the library and verify it."

"You can't go now."

"No, but if nothing happens for a day or so, I'll go. I'll come back later."

We spent an hour or so in Eldon's room, talking all around the trouble, and listening almost morbidly for evidence of further activity above; but there was nothing, and presently I returned to bed, almost as ill at ease for the lack of strange sounds and odours, as I had previously been at their happening.

The remainder of the night passed uneventfully, and so did the next day, during all of which my Uncle Asa did not come from his room. The second night passed quietly, also; so that on the following day I returned to Arkham, welcoming the sight of the ancient gambrel roofs and Georgian balustrades as the face of home.

In a fortnight I returned to Sandwin House, but nothing more had happened. I saw my uncle briefly and was astonished at the change in his aspect: he had grown to look more and more batrachian, and his body seemed to have shrunk a little. He made some effort to conceal his hands, but not before I had seen a peculiar transformation there: a curious growth of skin from finger to finger, the significance of which did not at first dawn on me. I asked him once what more he had heard from the visitors of that night two weeks ago.

"I'm waiting for Lloigor," he said cryptically, his eyes fixed beadily on the east windows, and a grimness about his mouth.

In this hiatus, I had learned more about the dread secrets of the Elder Gods and the beings of evil they had long ago banished to the hidden places of earth—the Arctic wastes, the desert land, the shunned Plateau of Leng

in the heart of Asia, the Lake of Hali, the vast and remote caverns under the seas. I had learned enough to be convinced of my uncle's hideous compact: the pledge of body and soul to serve the spawn of Cthulhu and Lloigor among the Tcho-Tcho people in remote Tibet, to serve them in after-life in their constant struggle against the domination of the Elder Gods, the seals put upon them by the retreating Ancient Ones, the struggle to rise again and spread horror throughout earth.

That my uncle's father and grandfather were even now so serving in some distant fastness, I could not reasonably doubt, for evidence of evil activity was all about me, not alone in tangible things, but in the incredibly strong aura of intangible terror that held the house in siege. On that second visit I found my cousin somewhat reassured, but still waiting half fearfully for something to happen. I could not stir him to any hope, but must perforce reveal to him some of the things I had verified in the ancient and forbidden books reposing in the vaults of Miskatonic.

On the night preceding my departure, while we sat a little uneasily in Eldon's room waiting for something to happen, the door was suddenly opened and my uncle came in, walking with a strange halting gait unnatural to him. He seemed somehow to have grown smaller, too, now that I saw him on his feet, and his clothes bagged on him.

"Eldon, why don't you go into Arkham with David tomorrow?" he said without preamble. "A little change will do you good."

"Yes, I'd like to have him," I said.

Eldon shook his head. "No, I'll stay to see that nothing happens to you, Father."

Uncle Asa laughed brittlely and, I thought, with a faint sneer, as if to deprecate anything Eldon might attempt to do. If Eldon did not understand his father's attitude, it was clear enough to me, since I knew more than Eldon something of the power of the primeval evil to which my uncle had become allied.

My uncle shrugged then. "Well, you're safe enough; unless you're frightened to death. I don't know."

"You expect something to happen soon, then?" I asked.

The old man gave me a searching glance. "It is clear that you do, David," he said thoughtfully. "I expect Lloigor, yes. If I am able to fight him, I shall

be free of him. If I am not—" He shrugged and added, "Then, I think, Sandwin House will be free of this accursed cloud of evil that has shrouded it for so long."

"There is a time?" I asked.

His glance did not waver, but his eyes narrowed a little. "When the full moon rises, I think. If my computations are correct, Arcturus must also be above the horizon before Lloigor can come on his cosmic wind—for, being a wind elemental, he will travel as wind. But I will be waiting for him." He shrugged once more, as if he were dismissing some trivial event instead of the grave threat to his life that was inherent in his words. "Very well, then, Eldon; do as you wish."

He left the room and Eldon turned to me.

"Can't we help him fight this thing, Dave? There must be some way."

"If there is a way, your father knows it."

He hesitated for a long minute before he spoke of something evidently on his mind for some time. "Did you notice father's appearance? How he seems to have changed?" He shuddered. "Like a frog, Dave."

I nodded. "There is some relation between his aspect and that of the creatures with whom he has become aligned. There was something of this in Innsmouth, too—people who bore a strange resemblance to the inhabitants of Devil Reef before the reef was bombed; you must remember it, Eldon."

He said no more until I spurred him on by telling him that he must keep in touch with me by telephone.

"That may be too late, Dave."

"No. I'll come at once. At the first sign of anything amiss, call me."

He agreed, and he went to bed for a restless but quiet night.

The April moon reached its greatest fullness at approximately midnight on the night of April twenty-seventh. Long before that time, I was ready for Eldon's telephone call; indeed more than once in the late afternoon and early evening hours, I had the impulse to go to Sandwin House without waiting for Eldon to call, but I resisted. At nine o'clock that night, Eldon called; oddly enough, I had just become cognisant of Arcturus standing over the roofs of Arkham in the east, its amber light glowing brightly despite the brilliance of the moon. That something had happened, I knew, for Eldon's

voice shook, his words were clipped, he was eager to say what he must so that I could come without delay.

"For God's sake, Dave—come."

He said no more; he needed to say no more. Within a few minutes I was in my car speeding up the coast towards Sandwin House. The night was quiet, windless; killdeers and whippoorwills were calling, and an occasional nighthawk swooped and skycoasted within the glow of my car's lights. The air was fragrant with the smell of growing things, the rich aroma of turned earth and early foliage, of swampland and open water, all in direct contrast to the horror that clung tenaciously to mind.

As before, Eldon met me in the yard at Sandwin House. I had no sooner got out of my car than he was there beside me, greatly distraught, his hands trembling.

"Ambrose has just gone," he said. "He went before the wind started—because of the whippoorwills."

As he spoke, I was conscious of the whippoorwills: scores of them calling from all around, and I remembered the superstition believed by so many of the natives—that at the approach of death, the whippoorwills, in the service of evil, called for the soul of the dying. Their crying was constant, unceasing, rising most steadily and loudly from the meadows west of Sandwin House, but sounding to some degree all around: a kind of maddening outcry for the birds seemed close, and the cry of a whippoorwill, nostalgic and lonely at a distance, multiplied many times and placed nearby, becomes a harsh, shrill call, difficult to tolerate for long: I smiled grimly at Ambrose's flight, and remembered Eldon's saying he had gone before the wind began. The night was windless still.

"What wind?" I asked abruptly.

"Come in."

He turned and led the way swiftly into the house.

From the moment that I stepped across the threshold of Sandwin House that night, I entered another world, remote from that I had just left. For the first thing of which I was cognisant was the high rushing sound of great winds; the house itself seemed to tremble under the impact of tremendous forces from without, and yet I knew, having just come in from outside, that the air was quiet, that no wind blew. The winds then, sounded within

the house, from the upper stories, those quarters occupied by my Uncle Asa, those quarters linked psychically to the incredible evil with which he had become allied. In addition to this incessant rushing of wind, there came as from a great distance that shudderingly familiar ululation, striking in from the east, and at the same time the sound of gigantic footsteps, the soggy, wet footsteps, accompanied by an undeniable sucking noise that seemed to emanate from somewhere beneath us and yet beyond the house itself, beyond even terrestrial earth as we knew it: this, too, arose from some psychic source; this, too, was a manifestation of those evil beings with whom the Sandwins had made the ghastly compact.

"Where's your father?" I asked.

"In his rooms; he won't come out. The door's shut, and I can't go in."

I went up the stairs towards the door to my uncle's quarters with the intention of opening that door by force. Eldon came protestingly behind; it was no use, he assured me; he had tried it and failed. I was almost upon the door when I was stopped in mid-stride by an impassible barrier—no thing of substance, but a wall of cold, chilling air beyond which I could not go, no matter how much I tried.

"You see!" cried Eldon.

I tried and tried again to reach through that impassive wall of air towards the door, but I could not. Finally, in desperation, I called out to Uncle Asa. But no human voice answered me; I was not answered at all save by the roaring of great winds somewhere beyond that door, for, strong as the winds had sounded in the lower hall, in the quarters occupied by my uncle the sound of them was incredibly powerful, and it seemed as if at any moment the walls must fly asunder by the terrific forces that were unleashed there. Throughout all this time, the sound of footsteps and the ululation too were growing in magnitude; they were *approaching* the house from the direction of the sea, if such an occurrence were possible in the light of their seeming already there, a part of the unholy aura of evil in which Sandwin House was cloaked. Simultaneously with the approach of these sounds from the water, there struck into our consciousness another sound from high above us, a sound so incredible that Eldon looked at me and I at him as if we had not heard aright: it was the sound of music and of voices singing, rising and falling, alternately clear and vague. But in a moment we understood the source of that music as the same from which had come that weirdly

beautiful music we had heard in our dreams in Sandwin House; for the music, on the surface of it so beautiful and ethereal, abounded with hellish undertones. It was such music as the sirens might have sung to Ulysses, it was as beautiful as the Venusburg music, but perverted by evil that was horribly manifest.

I turned to Eldon, who stood wide-eyed and trembling behind me. "Are there any windows open?"

"Not in father's rooms. He worked at that the past few days." He held his head cocked to one side and suddenly gripped my arm. "Listen!"

There arose now from beyond the door a growing ululation accompanied by a ghastly gibbering from among which certain words were audible, certain horrible words only too familiar to me from sight of them in those forbidden books at Miskatonic University, the sounds of those creatures bound in unholy alliance to the Sandwins, the evil mouthings of those hellish beings long ago banished to outer spaces, to remote places of earth and universe by the Elder Gods on distant Betelgeuse.

I listened with mounting horror, made all the greater by knowledge of my impotence, and tinged now with a certain nameless fear for my own existence. The mouthings beyond the door mounted in intensity, with occasionally a sharp sound that must have been made by someone different from them. Their own voices were clear, however, rising and falling even as music still sounded distantly, as if a group of servants were singing their adoration for their master, a hellish chant, a triumphant ululation:

"Iä! Iä! Lloigor! Ugh! Shub-Niggurath! . . . Lloigor fhtagn! Cthulhu fhtagn! Ithaqua! Ithaqua! . . . Iä! Iä! Lloigor naflfhtagn! Lloigor cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vutlagln, vulgtmm. Ai! Ai! Ai!"

There was a brief lull, during which some voice came as if in answer: a harsh, frog-like croaking of words unintelligible to me: in a voice whose harsh sound still bore some overtones vaguely, arrestingly familiar to me, as if somewhere before I had heard certain of these inflections. This harsh croaking came more and more hesitantly, the gutturals apparently failing the speaker, and then once again rose that triumphant ululation, that maddening chorus of voices from beyond the door, accompanied by such a feeling of dread horror that no words can describe it.

Trembling violently, my cousin held out his arm to show me that his wristwatch indicated but a few minutes before midnight, the hour of the full

moon. The voices in the rooms before us continued to rise in intensity, and the wind rose, so that it was as if we stood in a raging cyclone; at the same time the harsh croaking voice resumed again, mounting in intensity until abruptly it changed into the most awful wailing man ever heard, the crying of a lost soul, the demon-ridden scream of a soul lost for all time.

It was then, I think that realization came to me, that I knew and recognized the harsh croaking voice as not one of my uncle's hellish visitors at all, but *the voice of Uncle Asa!*

At the moment of this ghastly recognition, which must have come to Eldon at the same time, the sounds beyond the door rose to unbearable shrillness, the demoniac winds thundered and roared; my head whirled; I clapped my hands to my ears—so much I remember, and then nothing more.

I awoke to find Eldon bending over me; I was still in the upper hall, lying on the floor before the entrance to my uncle's quarters, and Eldon's pale, luminous eyes were peering anxiously into mine.

"You fainted," he whispered. "So did I."

I started up, startled by the sound of his voice that seemed so loud, though it had been but a whisper.

All was still. No sound disturbed the quiet of Sandwin House. At the far end of the hall the moonlight lay in a parallelogram of white light, lending a mystic illumination to the darkness all around. My cousin looked towards the door to my uncle's quarters, and I went forward unhesitatingly, and yet afraid of what we might find behind it.

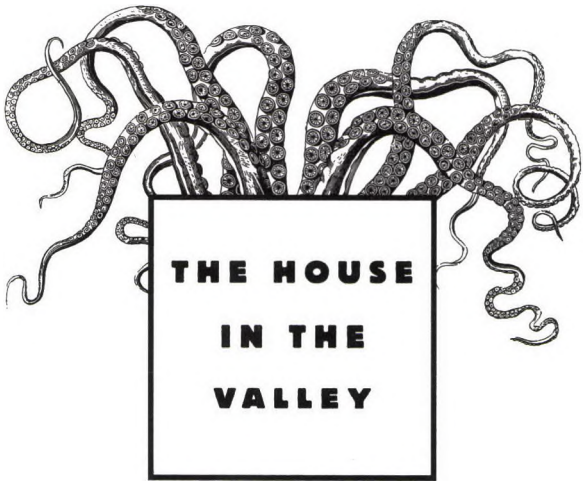
The door was still locked; we finally had to break it down. Eldon struck a match to relieve the deep darkness of the rooms.

I don't know what Eldon expected to find, but what we found was far beyond even my most fearful expectations. Even as Eldon had said, the windows had been boarded up so securely that not a single ray of moonlight penetrated the rooms, and on the sills had been laid a strange collection of five-pointed stones. But there had been one point of entrance my uncle had evidently forgotten: the attic window, though this was closed and locked save for a tiny break in one pane. The course of my uncle's visitors had been unmistakable—a wet trail leading into the quarters from the trapdoor near the attic window. The rooms were in frightful condition: no single thing re-

mained intact save the chair in which my uncle habitually sat; it was indeed as if a powerful gale had torn asunder papers, furniture, hangings with equal malevolence.

But it was my uncle's chair to which our attention was directed, and what we saw there was all the more frightful in its significance now that the tangible aura of horror had been removed from Sandwin House. The trail leading from the trapdoor and attic window went directly to my uncle's chair and back again: a strange shapeless procession of marks—snake-like, some of them, the prints of webbed feet, which, most curiously, seemed to emanate from the chair in which my uncle had been wont to sit and pass outward: all led back to that tiny break in the pane of the attic window; something had come in and something more had gone out. Incredible, terrible, awful to contemplate—what must have taken place while we lay beyond the door, what must have wrung from my uncle that terrible wailing we had heard before we lapsed into unconsciousness.

For of my uncle there was no trace save one—the ghastly remnants of what stood *for* him, rather than *of* him. *In the chair, his favourite chair, lay his clothes: not taken off and flung carelessly down, not that—but in the horrible, life-like position of a man sitting there, fallen a little together: from cravat to shoes, the terrible mockery of a man sitting there—but they were empty, a shell about which clung an abysmal clothing shaped by some ghastly power beyond our comprehension into the effigy of the man who had worn them, the man who, by all the evidence, was drawn or sucked out of them as by some frightful malign being who employed in his aid the terrible wind heard within the rooms: the mark of Lloigor, who walks the winds among the star-spaces, the terrible Lloigor against whom my uncle had had no weapon!*



I, JEFFERSON BATES, make this deposition now, in full knowledge that, whatever the circumstances, I have not long to live. I do so in justice to those who survive me, as well as in an attempt to clear myself of the charge of which I have been so unjustly convicted. A great, if little-known American writer in the tradition of the Gothic once wrote that "the most merciful thing in the world is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents," yet I have had ample time for intense thought and reflection, and I have achieved an order in my thoughts I would never have thought possible only so little as a year ago.

For, of course, it was within the year that my "trouble" began. I put it so because I am not yet certain what other name to give it. If I had to set a precise day, I suppose in all fairness, it must be the day on which Brent Nicholson telephoned me in Boston to say he had discovered and rented for me the very place of isolation and natural beauty I had been seeking for the purpose of working at some paintings I had long had in mind. It lay in an almost hidden valley beside a broad stream, not far from, yet well in from the Massachusetts coast, in the vicinity of the ancient settlements of Arkham and Dunwich, which every artist of the region knows for their cu-

rious gambrel structure, so pleasing to the eye, however forbidding to the spirit.

True, I hesitated. There were always fellow artists pausing for a day in Arkham or Dunwich or Kingston, and it was precisely fellow artists I sought to escape. But in the end, Nicholson persuaded me, and within the week I found myself at the place. It proved to be a large, ancient house—certainly of the same vintage as so many in Arkham—which had been built in a little valley which ought to have been fertile but showed no sign of recent cultivation. It rose among gaunt pines, which crowded close on the house, and along one wall ran a broad, clear brook.

Despite the attractiveness it offered the eye at a distance, up close it presented another face. For one thing, it was painted black. For another, it wore an air of forbidding formidableness. Its curtainless windows stared outward gloomily. All around it on the ground floor ran a narrow porch which had been stuffed and crammed with bundles of sacking tied with twine, half-rotted chairs, highboys, tables, and a singular variety of old-fashioned household objects, like a barricade designed either to keep someone or something inside or to prevent it from getting in. This barricade had manifestly been there a long time, for it showed the effects of exposure to several years of weather. Its reason for being was too obscure even for the agent, to whom I wrote to ask, but it did help to lend the house a most curious air of being inhabited, though there was no sign of life, and nothing, indeed, to show that anyone had lived there for a very long time.

But this was an illusion which never left me. It was plain to see that no one had been in the house, not even Nicholson or the agent, for the barricade extended across both front and back doors of the almost square structure, and I had to pull away a section of it in order to make an entry myself.

Once inside, the impression of habitation was all the stronger. But there was a difference—all the gloom of the black-painted exterior was reversed inside. Here everything was light and surprisingly clean, considering the period of its abandonment. Moreover, the house was furnished, scantily, true, but furnished, whereas I had received the distinct impression that everything which had once been inside had been piled up around the house on the verandah outside.

The house inside was as box-like as it appeared on the outside. There

were four rooms below—a bedroom, a kitchen-pantry, a dining-room, a sitting-room; and upstairs, four of exactly the same dimensions—three bedrooms, and a store-room. There were plenty of windows in all the rooms, and especially those facing north, which was gratifying, since the north light is best for painting.

I had no use for the second storey; so I chose the bedroom on the northwest corner for my studio, and it was there that I put in my things, without regard for the bed, which I pushed aside. I had come, after all, to work at my paintings, and not for any social life whatever. And I had come amply supplied, with my car so laden that it took me most of the first day to unload and store my things, and to clear away a path from the back door, as I had cleared the front, so that I might have access to both north and south sides of the house with equal facility.

Once settled, with a lamp lit against the encroaching darkness, I took out Nicholson's letter and read it once more, as it were, in the proper setting, taking note again of the points he made.

"Isolation will indeed be yours. The nearest neighbours are at least a mile away. They are the Perkinses on the ridge to the south. Not far past them are the Mores. On the other side, which would make it north, are the Bowdens.

"The reason for the long-term desertion is one which ought to appeal to you. People did not want to rent or buy it simply because it had once been occupied by one of those strange ingrown families which are common in obscure and isolated rural areas—the Bishops, of which the last surviving member, a gaunt, lanky creature named Seth, committed a murder in the house, the one fact which the superstitious natives allow to deter them from use of either the house or the land, which, as you will see—if you had any use for it—is rich and fertile. Even a murderer could be a creative artist in his way, I suppose—but Seth, I fear, was anything but that. He seems to have been somewhat crude, and killed without any good reason—a neighbour, I understand. Simply tore him apart. Seth was a very strong man. Gives me cold chills, but hardly you. The victim was a Bowden.

"There is a telephone, which I ordered connected.

"The house has its own power plant, too. So it's not as ancient as it looks. Though this was put in long after the house was originally built. It's in the cellar, I am told. It may not be working now.

"No waterworks, sorry. The well ought to be good, and you'll need some exercise to keep yourself fit—you can't keep fit sitting at an easel.

"The house looks more isolated than it is. If you get lonely, just telephone me."

The power plant, of which he had written, was not working. The lights in the house were dead. But the telephone was in working order, as I ascertained by placing a call to the nearest village, which was Aylesbury.

I was tired that first night, and went to bed early. I had brought my own bedding, of course, taking no chances on anything left for so long a time in the house, and I was soon asleep. But every instant of my initial day in the house I was aware of that vague, almost intangible conviction that the house was occupied by someone other than myself, though I knew how absurd this was for I had made a thorough tour of the house and premises soon after I had first entered it, and had found no place where anyone might be concealed.

Every house, as no sensitive person needs to be told, has its own individual atmosphere. It is not only the smell of wood, or of brick, old stone, paint—no, it is also a sort of residue of people who have lived there and of events which have transpired within its walls. The atmosphere of the Bishop house challenged description. There was the customary smell of age, which I expected, of dampness rising from the cellar, but there was something beyond this and of greater importance, something which actually lent the house itself an aura of life, as if it were a sleeping animal waiting with infinite patience for something, which it knew must happen, to take place.

It was not, let me say at once, anything to prompt uneasiness. It did not seem to me in that first week to have about it any element of dread or fear, and it did not occur to me to be at all disquieted until one morning in my second week—after I had already completed two imaginative canvases, and was at work outside on a third. I was conscious that morning of being scrutinized; at first I told myself, jokingly, that of course the house was watching me, for its windows did look like blank eyes peering out of that sombre black; but presently I knew that my observer stood somewhere to the rear, and from time to time I flashed glances towards the edge of the little woods which rose southwest of the house.

At last I located the hidden watcher. I turned to face the bushes where he was concealed, and said, "Come on out; I know you're there."

At that a tall, freckle-faced young man rose up and stood looking at me with hard, dark eyes, manifestly suspicious and belligerent.

"Good morning," I said.

He nodded, without saying anything.

"If you're interested, come on up and have a look," I said.

He thawed a little and stepped out of the bushes. He was, I saw now, perhaps twenty. He was clad in jeans, and was barefooted, a lithe young fellow, well-muscled, and undoubtedly quick and alert. He walked forward a little way, coming just close enough so that he could see what I was doing, and there stopped. He favoured me with a frank examination. Finally he spoke.

"Your name Bishop?"

Of course, the neighbours might understandably think that a member of the family had turned up in some remote corner of the earth and come back to claim the abandoned property. The name of Jefferson Bates would mean nothing to him. Moreover, I was curiously reluctant to tell him my name, which I could not understand. I answered civilly enough that my name was not Bishop, that I was not a relative, that I had only rented the house for the summer and perhaps a month or two in the fall.

"My name's Perkins," he said. "Bud Perkins. From up yonder." He gestured towards the ridge to the south.

"Glad to know you."

"You been here a week," Bud continued, offering proof that my arrival had not gone unnoticed in the valley. "You're still here."

There was a note of surprise in his voice, as if the fact of my being in the Bishop house after a week was strange of itself.

"I mean," he went on, "nothing's happened to you. What with all the goings-on in this house, it's a wonder."

"What goings-on?" I asked bluntly.

"Don't you know?" he asked, open-mouthed.

"I know about Seth Bishop."

He shook his head vigorously. "That ain't near the all of it, Mister. I wouldn't set foot in that house if I was paid for it—and paid good. Makes my spine prickle jest to be standing this near to it." He frowned darkly. "It's a place should-a been burned down long ago. What were them Bishops doing all hours of the night?"

"Looks clean," I said. "It's comfortable enough. Not even a mouse in it."

"Hah! If 'twas only mice! You wait."

With that he turned and plunged back into the woods.

I realized, of course, that many local superstitions must have arisen about the abandoned Bishop house; what more natural than that it should be haunted? Nevertheless, Bud Perkins' visit left a disagreeable impression with me. Clearly, I had been under secret observation ever since my arrival; I understood that new neighbours are always of interest to people, but I also perceived that the interest of my neighbours in this isolated spot was not of quite that nature. They expected something to happen; they were waiting for it to take place; and only the fact that nothing had as yet occurred had brought Bud Perkins within range.

That night the first untoward "incident" took place. Quite possibly Bud Perkins' oblique comments had set the stage by preparing me for something to happen. In any case, the "incident" was so nebulous as to be almost negative, and there were a dozen explanations for it; it is only in the light of later events that I remember it at all. It happened perhaps two hours after midnight.

I was awakened from sleep by an unusual sound. Now, anyone sleeping in a new place grows accustomed to the sounds of the night in that region, and, once accustomed to them, accepts them in sleep; but any new sound is apt to obtrude. Just as a city-dweller spending several nights on a farm may accustom himself to the noises of chickens, birds, the wind, frogs, may be awakened by the new note of a toad trilling because it is strange to the chorus to which he has become accustomed, so I was aware of a new sound in the chorus of whippoorwills, owls, and nocturnal insects which invaded the night.

The new sound was a subterranean one; that is, it seemed to come from far below the house, deep down under the surface of the earth. It might have been earth settling, it might have been a fissure opening and closing, it might readily have been a fugitive trembler, except that it came and went with a certain regularity, as if it were made by some very large thing moving along a colossal cavern far beneath the house. It lasted perhaps half an hour; it seemed to approach from the east and diminish in the same direction in fairly even progression of sounds. I could not be sure, but I had the uncertain impression that the house trembled faintly under these subterranean sounds.

Perhaps it was this which impelled me on the following day to poke about in the store-room in an effort to find out for myself what my inquisitive neighbour had meant by his questions and hints about the Bishops. What had they been doing that their neighbours thought so bad?

The store-room, however, was less crammed than I had expected it to be, perhaps largely because so many things had been put out on the verandah. Indeed, the only unusual aspect of it that I could find was a shelf of books which had evidently been in the process of being read when tragedy had obliterated the family.

These were of various kinds.

Perhaps chief among them were several gardening texts. They were extremely old books, and had been long in disuse, quite possibly hidden away by an earlier member of the Bishop family, and only recently discovered. I glanced into two or three of these, and found them to be completely useless for any modern gardener, since they described methods of raising and caring for plants which were unknown to me, for the most part—hellebore, mandrake, nightshade, witch hazel, and the like; and such of the pages which were given over to the more familiar vegetables were filled with bits of lore and superstition which held utterly no meaning for anyone in this modern world.

There was also one paper-covered book devoted to the lore of dreams. This did not appear to have been much read, though its condition was such for dust and lint, that it was impossible to draw any conclusions about it. It was one of those inexpensive books which were popular two or three generations ago, and its dream interpretations were the most ordinary; it was, in short, just such a book as one might expect a rather ignorant countryman to pick up.

Indeed, of them all, only one interested me. This was a most curious book indeed. It was a monumental tome, entirely copied in longhand, and bound by hand in wood. Though it very probably had no literary worth whatsoever, it could have existed in any museum of curiosa. At that time I made little attempt to read it, for it seemed to be a compilation of gibberish similar to the nonsense in the dream book. It had a crudely lettered title which indicated that its ultimate source must have been some private old library—*Seth Bishop, His Book :: Being Excerpts from the "Necronomicon" & the "Cultes des Goules" & the* "Pnakotic Manuscripts" *& the "R'lyeh Text" Copied in His Own Hand*

by Seth Bishop in the Yrs. 1919 to 1923. Underneath, in a spidery hand which did not seem likely for one known to be so uneducated, he had scrawled his signature.

In addition to these, there were several works allied to the dream book. A copy of the notorious *Seventh Book of Moses,* a text much prized by certain oldsters in the Pennsylvania hex country—which, thanks to newspaper accounts of a recent hex murder, I knew about. A slender prayer-book in which all the prayers seemed to be mockeries, for all were directed to Asarael and Sathanus, and other dark angels.

There was nothing of any value whatsoever, apart from being simply curious items, in the entire lot. Their presence testified only to a diversity of dark interests on the part of succeeding generations of the Bishop family for it was fairly evident that the owner and reader of the gardening books was very probably Seth's grandfather, while the owner of the dream book and the hex text was most likely a member of Seth's father's generation. Seth himself seemed interested in more obscure lore.

The works from which Seth had copied, however, seemed appreciably more erudite than I had been led to believe a man of Seth's background would be likely to consult. This puzzled me, and at the first opportunity I travelled into Aylesbury to make such inquiries as I could at a country store on the outskirts of the village, where, I reasoned, Seth might most probably have made purchases, since he had had the reputation of being a reclusive individual.

The proprietor, who turned out to be a distant relative of Seth's on his mother's side, seemed somewhat loath to speak of Seth, but did ultimately reveal something in his reluctant answers to my persistent questions. From him, whose name was Obed Marsh, I gathered that Seth had "at first"—that is, presumably as a child and young man—been as "backward as any of that clan." In Seth's later teens, he had grown "queer," by which Marsh meant that Seth had taken to a more solitary existence; he had spoken at that time with frequency of strange and disturbing dreams he had had, of noises he had heard, of visions he believed he saw in and out of the house; but, after two or three years of this, Seth had never mentioned a word of these things again. Instead, he had locked himself up in a room downstairs—which had certainly been the store-room, judging by Marsh's description—and read everything he could lay his hands on, for all that he never "went past the

fourth grade." Later on, he had gone into Arkham, to the library of Miskatonic University, to read more books. After that "spell," Seth had come home and lived as a solitary until the time of his outbreak—the horrible murder of Amos Bowden.

All this, certainly, added up to little save a tale of a mind ill-equipped for learning, trying desperately to assimilate knowledge, the burden of which seemed to have ultimately snapped that mind. So, at least, it appeared at this juncture of my tenure of the Bishop house.

2

THAT NIGHT EVENTS took a singular turn.

But, like so many other aspects of that strange sojourn, I was not aware immediately of the full implications of what happened. Set down baldly, it seems absurd that it should have given me any cause for second thought. It was nothing more than a dream which I experienced in the course of that night. Even as a dream, it was not particularly horrifying or even frightening, rather more awesome and impressive.

I dreamed simply that I lay asleep in the Bishop house, that while I so lay a vague, indefinable, but somehow awesome and powerful cloud—like a fog or mist—took shape out of the cellar, billowed up through the floors and walls, engulfing the furniture, but not seeming to harm it or the house, taking shape, meanwhile, as a huge, amorphous creature with tentacles flowing from its monstrous head, and swaying like a cobra back and forth all the while it gave voice to a strange ululation, while from somewhere in the distance a chorus of weird instruments played unearthly music, and a human voice chanted inhuman words which, as I subsequently learned, were written thusly:

Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.

In the end, the amorphous creature billowed ever farther upwards, and engulfed also the sleeper who was I. Thereupon it seemed to dissolve into a long dark passageway, down which came at a frantically eager lope a human being who was certainly similar in appearance to descriptions I had had of the late Seth Bishop. This being grew in size, too, looming almost as large as the amorphous fog, and vanished even as it had done, coming straight at the sleeping figure in the bed in that house in the valley.

Now, on the face of it, this dream was meaningless. It was a nightmare, beyond question; but it lacked any capacity for fear. I seemed to be aware that something of tremendous importance was happening to me or about to happen to me, but, not understanding it, I could not fear it; moreover, the amorphous creature, the chanting voice, the ululations, and the strange music all lent a ritual impressiveness to the dream.

On awakening in the morning, however, I found it readily possible to recall the dream, and I was obsessed with a persistent conviction that all its aspects were not really strange to me. Somewhere I had heard or seen the written equivalent of that fantastic chanting, and, so thinking, I found myself once more in the store-room, poring over that incredible book in Seth Bishop's handwriting; reading here and there and discovering with wonder that the text concerned an ancient series of beliefs in Elder Gods and Ancient Ones and a conflict between them, between the Elder Gods and such creatures as Hastur and Yog-Sothoth and Cthulhu. This, at last, struck a familiar note, and seeking farther, I discovered what was certainly the chant I had heard—with, moreover, its translation in Seth Bishop's hand, which read:

In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.

The one disturbing factor in this discovery was that I had most certainly not seen the line of the chant on occasion of my examination of the room. I might have seen the name "Cthulhu," but nothing more in that cursory glance at the Bishop manuscript. How then could I have duplicated a fact which was not part of my conscious or subconscious store of knowledge? It is not commonly believed that the mind can duplicate in a dream state or any other any experience which is utterly alien to it. Yet I had done so.

What was more, as I read on in that often shocking text of queer survivals and hellish cults, I found that hints in vague descriptive passages described just such a being as I had seen in my dream—not of fog or mist, but of solid matter, which was a second occurrence of the duplication of something utterly alien to my experience.

I had, of course, heard of psychic residue—residual forces left behind at the scene of any event, be it major tragedy or any powerful emotional ex-

perience common to mankind—love, hate, fear—and it was possible that something of this sort had brought about my dream, as were it the atmosphere of the house itself invading and possessing me while I slept, which I did not regard as completely impossible, since certainly it was strange and the events which had taken place there were experiences of impressive power.

Now, however, though it was noon and the demands of my body for food were great, it seemed to me that the next step in pursuit of my dream lay in the cellar. So to it I made my way at once, and there, after a most exhaustive search, which included the moving away from the walls of tiers of shelves, some still with ancient jars of preserved fruit and vegetables on them, I discovered a hidden passageway which led out of the cellar into a cave-like tunnel, down part of which I walked. I did not go far, before the dampness of the earth underfoot, and the wavering of my light, forced me to return—but not before I had seen the disquieting whiteness of scattered bones, embedded in that earth.

When I returned to that subterranean passageway after replenishing my flashlight, I did not quit it before ascertaining beyond reasonable doubt that the bones were those of animals—for, clearly, there had been more than one animal. What was disturbing about their discovery was not their being there, but the puzzling question of how they had got there.

But I did not at the time give this much thought. I was interested in pushing deeper into that tunnel, and I did so, going as far in the direction, I thought, of the seacoast, as I could before my passage was blocked by a fall of earth. When at last I left the tunnel it was late in the afternoon, and I was famished; but I was reasonably certain of two things—the tunnel was not a natural cave, at least at this end; it was clearly the work of human hands; and it had been used for some dark purpose, the nature of which I could not know.

Now for some reason, these discoveries filled me with excitement. Had I been fully in control of myself, I have no doubt that I would have realized that this in itself was unlike me, but at the moment I was faced and challenged with a mystery which seemed to me insistently of the greatest importance, and I was determined to discover all I could of this apparently hitherto unknown part of the Bishop property. This I could not very well do until another day, and in order to find my way through the cave, I would need implements I had not yet found on the property.

Another trip to Aylesbury was unavoidable. I went at once to the store of Obed Marsh and asked for a pick and shovels. For some reason this request seemed to upset the old man beyond all reason. He paled and hesitated to wait on me.

"You aimin' to dig, Mr. Bates?"

I nodded.

"'Tain't none o' my business, but maybe you'd like to know that was what Seth took to doin' for a spell. Wore out three, four shovels, diggin'." He leaned forward, his intense eyes glittering. "And the queerest thing about it was nobody could find out where he was diggin'—never see a shovelful of dirt anywhere."

I was somewhat taken aback by this information, but I did not hesitate. "That soil there around the house looks rich and fertile," I said.

He seemed relieved. "Well, if you're aimin' to garden, that's a different thing."

One other purchase I made puzzled him. I needed a pair of rubber boots to shield my shoes from the muck and many parts of the tunnel floor, where, doubtless, the nearness of the brook outside caused seepage. But Marsh said nothing about this. As I turned to go, he spoke again of Seth.

"Ain't heard tell anything more, have you, Mr. Bates?"

"People hereabouts don't talk much."

"They ain't all Marshes," he replied, with a furtive grin. "There's some that do say Seth was more Marsh than Bishop. The Bishops believed in hexes and such-like. But never the Marshes."

With this cryptic announcement ringing in my ears, I took my leave. Prepared now for the tunnel, I could hardly wait for the morrow to come, so that I could return once more to that subterranean place and carry on my explorations into a mystery which must certainly have been related to the entire legendry surrounding the Bishop family.

Events were now moving forward at an increasing tempo. That night two more occurrences were recorded.

The first came to my attention just past dawn, when I caught sight of Bud Perkins lurking about outside the house. I was needlessly annoyed, perhaps, since I was making ready to descend into the cellar; just the same I wanted to know what he was after; so I opened the door and stepped out into the yard to confront him.

"What are you looking for, Bud?" I asked.

"Lost a sheep," he said laconically.

"I haven't seen it."

"It come this way," he answered.

"Well, you're welcome to look."

"Sure hate to think this's all settin' up to start again," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"If you don't know, 'twon't do any good to say. If you do, it's better I don't say a thing, anyway. So I'm not sayin'."

This mystifying conversation baffled me. At the same time, Bud Perkins' obvious suspicion that somehow his sheep had come to my hands was irritating. I stepped back and threw open the door.

"Look in the house if you like."

But at this, his eyes opened wide in positive horror. "Me set foot in there?" he cried. "Not for my life." He added, "Why, I'm the only one's got gumption enough to come this close to the place. But I wouldn't step in there for all the money you could pay me. Not me."

"It's perfectly safe," I said, unable to conceal a smile at his fright.

"Maybe you think so. We know better. We know what's waitin' there behind them black walls, waitin' and waitin' for somebody to come. And now you've come. And now things are startin' up again, jest like before."

With that, he turned and ran, vanishing as on his previous visit into the woods. When I had satisfied myself that he was not coming back, I turned and re-entered the house. And there I made a discovery which ought to have been alarming, but which seemed to me then only vaguely unusual, since I must clearly have been in a lethargic state, not yet fully awake. The new boots I had bought only yesterday for my use had been used; they were caked with mud. Yet I knew indisputably that they had been clean and unused yesterday.

At the sight of them, a growing conviction took form in my mind. Without putting on the boots, I descended into the cellar, opened the wall into the tunnel, and walked rapidly to the area of the barrier. Perhaps I had a premonitory certainty of what I would find, for I found it—the cave-in of earth had been dug partially away, sufficiently for a man to squeeze through. And the tracks in the wet earth were clearly made by the new boots I had

bought, for the stamped trade-mark in the sole of those boots was plainly to be seen in the glow of my flashlight.

I was thus faced with one of two alternatives—either someone had used my boots in the night to effect this change in the tunnel, or I myself had walked in my sleep to bring it about. And I could not much doubt which it had been—for, despite my eagerness and anticipation, I was fatigued in a way which would have been accounted for only by my having spent a considerable portion of my sleeping hours digging away at this blockade in the passageway.

I cannot escape the conviction now that even then I knew what I should find when I pursued my way down that tunnel—the ancient altar-like structures in the subterranean caverns into which the tunnels opened, the evidence of further sacrifice—not alone animals this time, but undeniably human bones, and at the end, the vast cavern opening downwards and the faint glimmering far below of waters, surging powerfully in and out through some opening far down, the Atlantic Ocean itself beyond doubt, which had made its way to this place by means of sub-surface caverns on the coast. And I must have had a premonition, too, of what else I should see there at the edge of that final descent into the aquatic abyss—the tufts of wool, the single hoof with its portion of torn and broken leg—all that remained of a sheep, fresh as the night just past!

I turned and fled, badly shaken, unwilling to guess how the sheep had got there—Bud Perkins' animal, I felt certain. And had it, too, been brought there for the same purpose as the creatures whose remains I had seen before those dark and broken altars in the lesser caverns between this place of constantly stirring waters and the house I had left not long ago?

I did not tarry in the house long, either, but made my way into Aylesbury once again, apparently aimlessly, but, as I know now, pressed by my need to know yet more of what legend and lore had accumulated about the Bishop house. But at Aylesbury I experienced for the first time the full force of public disapproval, for people on the street averted their eyes from me and turned their backs to me. One young man to whom I spoke hurried past me as if I had not spoken at all.

Even Obed Marsh had changed in his attitude. He was nothing loath to take my money, but was surly in his manner and obviously wished that I

would leave his store as soon as possible. But here I made it clear I would not move until my questions had been answered.

What had I done, I wanted to know, that people should shun me as they did?

"It's that house," he said finally.

"I'm not the house," I retorted, dissatisfied.

"There's talk," he said then.

"Talk? What kind of talk?"

"About you and Bud Perkins' sheep. About the way things happened when Seth Bishop was alive." Then he leaned forward with a dark, beetling face, and whispered harshly, "There's them that say Seth's come back."

"Seth Bishop's dead and buried this long time."

He nodded. "Aye, part of him is. But part of him maybe ain't. I'll tell you, best thing in the world is for you to clear out now. You got time yet."

I reminded him coldly that I had leased the Bishop place and had paid the rent for at least four months, with an option to complete a year there. He clammed up at once and would say nothing further about my tenure. I pressed him, nevertheless, for details about Seth Bishop's life, but all he would or could tell me was clearly the summation of vague, uncertain hints and dark suspicions which had been common in the vicinity, so that I left him at last not with any picture of Seth Bishop as a man to be feared, but rather of him as a man to be pitied, kept at bay in his black-walled house in the valley like an animal by his neighbours on the ridge and the people of Aylesbury, who were at one in hating and fearing him, without any but the most circumstantial evidence that he had committed any crime against the safety or peace of the environs.

What, in fact, had Seth Bishop knowingly done—apart from the final crime of which he had been proved guilty? He had led a recluse's existence, abandoning even the strange garden of his ancestors, turning his back, certainly, on what was reputed to be his grandfather's and his father's sinister interest in wizardry and the lore of the occult, instead of which he had interested himself obsessively in a far more ancient lore which appeared to be fully as ridiculous as that of witchcraft. One might expect such interests not to falter in such isolated areas, and, in particular, among families so ingrown as the Bishop family was.

Perhaps somewhere in the old books of his forebears Seth had found

certain obscure references which had sent him to the library at Miskatonic, where, in his consuming interest, he had undertaken the monumental task of copying great portions of books, which, presumably, he could not get permission to withdraw from the library. This lore which was his primary concern was, in fact, a distortion of ancient Christian legend; reduced to its most simple terms, it was a record of the cosmic struggle between forces of good and forces of evil.

However difficult it was to summarize, it would appear that the first inhabitants of outer space were great beings, not in human shape, who were called the Elder Gods and lived on Betelgeuse, at a remote time. Against these certain elemental Ancient Ones, also called the Great Old Ones, had rebelled—Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, the amphibious Cthulhu, the bat-like Hastur the Unspeakable, Lloigor, Zhar, Ithaqua the Wind-Walker, and the earth beings, Nyarlathotep and Shub-Niggurath; but, their rebellion failing, they were cast out and banished by the Elder Gods—locked away on far planets and stars under the seal of the Elder Gods—Cthulhu deep under the sea in the place known as R'lyeh, Hastur on a black star near Aldebaran in the Hyades, Ithaqua in the icy Arctic barrens, still others in a place known as Kadath in the Cold Waste, which existed in time and space conterminously with a portion of Asia.

Since this initial rebellion—which was basically in a legend pattern paralleling the rebellion of Satan and his followers against the arch-angels of Heaven—the Great Old Ones had continually sought to regain their power to war against the Elder Gods, and there have grown up on earth and other planets certain cultists and followers—like the Abominable Snowmen, the Dholes, the Deep Ones, and many others, all dedicated to serve the Ancient Ones, and often succeeding in removing the Elder Seal to free the forces of ancient evil, which had then to be put down again either by direct intervention of the Elder Gods or by the alert watchfulness of human beings armed against them.

This was the sum total of what Seth Bishop had copied from very old and very rare books, much of it repetitive, and all surely the wildest kind of fantasy. True, there were certain disturbing newspaper clippings appended to the manuscript—of what happened at Devil Reef off Innsmouth in 1928, of a supposed sea serpent in Rick's Lake, Wisconsin, of a terrible occurrence at nearby Dunwich, and another in the wilds of Vermont, but these,

beyond question, I felt to be coincidental accounts which happened to strike a parallel chord. And, while it was also true that there was as yet no explanation for the subterranean passage leading towards the coast, I felt comfortably certain that it was the work of some distant forebear of Seth Bishop's, and only appropriated for his own use at a considerably later date.

All that emerged from this was the portrait of an ignorant man striving to improve himself in the directions which appealed to him. Gullible and superstitious he may have been, and at the end, perhaps deranged—but evil, surely not.

3

IT WAS AT ABOUT this time that I became aware of a most curious fancy.

It seemed to me that there was someone else in the house in the valley, an alien human being who had no business there, but intruded from outside. Though his occupation seemed to be to paint pictures, I was reasonably certain that he had come to spy. I caught only the most fugitive glimpses of him—on occasion a reflection in a mirror or in a windowpane when I was near, but I saw in the north room of the ground floor the evidence of his work—one unfinished canvas on his easel, and several that had been completed.

I did not have the time to look for him, for the One below commanded me, and each night I descended with food, not for him, for he devoured what no mortal man knew, but for those of the deeps who accompanied him, and came swimming up out of that cavernous pit, and were to my eyes like a travesty born of men and batrachian things, with webbed hands and feet, and gilled, and wide, frog-like mouths, and great staring eyes made to see in the darkest recesses of the vast seas about the place where he lay sleeping, waiting to rise and come forth once more and take possession again of his kingdom, which was on earth and in the space and time all about this planet, where once he had ruled above all others until the casting-down.

Perhaps this was the result of my coming upon the old diary, which now I settled down to read, as were it a book I had treasured since childhood. I found it by accident in the cellar, mildewed and showing the effects of

having been long lost—a fortunate thing, for there were in it things no outsider should see.

The early pages were gone, having been torn out and burned in an excess of fear, before any self-confidence had come. But all the others were still there, and plain to be read in their spidery script . . .

"Jun. 8, Went to the meeting-place at eight, dragging the calf from Mores. Counted forty-two of the Deep Ones. Also one other, not of them, which was like an octopus, but was not. Remained there three hours."

That was the first entry I saw. Thereafter the entries were similar—of trips underground to the water pits, of meetings with the Deep Ones and occasionally other water beings. In September of that year, a catastrophe . . .

"Sept. 21, The pits crowded. Learned something terrible had happened at Devil Reef. One of the old fools at Innsmouth gave things away, and the Federal Men came with submarines and boats to blast Devil Reef and the waterfront at Innsmouth. The Marsh crowd got away, most of them. Many Deep Ones killed. Depth charges did not reach R'lyeh where He lives dreaming . . .

"Sept. 22, More reports from Innsmouth. 371 Deep Ones killed. Many taken from Innsmouth, all those who were given away by the Marsh 'look.' One of them said what was left of the Marsh clan had fled to Ponape. Three of the Deep Ones here tonight from that place; they say they remember how old Captain Marsh came there, and what a compact he made with them, and how he took one of them and married her, and had children who were born of man and the Deep Ones, tainting the whole Marsh clan forever, and how ever since then the Marsh ships fared well, and all their sea enterprises succeeded beyond their wildest dreams; they grew rich and powerful, the wealthiest of all the families at Innsmouth, to which they took their clan to live by day in the houses and by night slipping away to be with the other Deep Ones off the reef. The Marsh houses in Innsmouth were burned. So the Federal Men knew. But the Marshes will be back, say the Deep Ones, and all will begin again towards that day when the Great Old One below the sea will rise once more.

"Sept. 23, Destruction terrible at Innsmouth.

"Sept. 24, It will be years before the Innsmouth places will be ready again. They will wait till the Marshes come back."

They might say what they liked of Seth Bishop. No fool, he. This was

the record of a self-educated man. All that work at Miskatonic had not been in vain. He alone of all who lived in the Aylesbury region knew what lay hidden in the Atlantic depths off the coast; none other even suspected . . .

This was the direction of my thoughts, the preoccupation of my days at the Bishop house. I thought thusly, I lived so. And by night?

Once darkness had come to the house, I was more keenly aware than ever that something impended. But somehow memory rejects what must have happened. Could it be otherwise? I knew why the furniture had been moved out on the verandah—because the Deep Ones had begun to come back along the passage, had come up into the house. They were amphibious. They had literally crowded the furniture out and Seth had never taken it back.

Each time I left the house to go any distance, I seemed to see it once again in its proper perspective, which was no longer possible while I occupied it. The attitude of my neighbours was now quite threatening. Not only Bud Perkins came to look at the house, but some of the Bowdens and the Mores, and certain others from Aylesbury. I let them all in without comment—those who would come. Bud would not, nor would any of the Bowdens. But the others searched in vain for what they expected to find and did not.

And what was it they expected to find? Certainly not the cows, the chickens, the pigs and sheep they said had been taken. What use would I have for them? I showed them how frugally I lived, and they looked at the paintings. But one and all went away sullenly, shaking their heads, unconvinced.

Could I do more? I knew they shunned and hated me, and kept their distance from the house.

But they disturbed and troubled me, nevertheless. There were mornings when I woke near to noon, and woke exhausted, as if I had not slept at all. Most troubling of all, often I found myself dressed, whereas I knew I had gone to bed undressed, and I found blood spattered on my clothing and covering my hands.

I was afraid to go back into that subterranean passage by day, but I forced myself to do so one day, just the same. I went down with my flashlight, and I examined the floor of that tunnel with care. Wherever the earth was soft, I saw the marks of many feet, passing back and forth. Most of them were human footprints, but there were disquieting others—naked feet with blurred toes, as if they were webbed! I confess I turned the light away from them, shuddering.

What I saw at the edge of the water pits sent me fleeing back along the passage. Something had climbed out of those watery depths—the marks were plain to see and understand, and what had taken place there was not difficult to imagine, for all the evidence scattered there in the mute remains which lay gleaming whitely under the glow of my flashlight!

I knew it could not be long before the neighbours allowed their resentment to boil over. There was no peace capable of achievement in that house, nor, indeed in the valley. Old hatreds, old enmities persisted, and thrived in that place. I soon lost all sense of time; I existed in another world, literally, for the house in the valley was surely the focal point for entry into another realm of being.

I do not know how long I had been in the house—perhaps six weeks—perhaps two months—when one day the sheriff of the county, accompanied by two of his deputies, came grim-faced to the house with a warrant for my arrest. He explained that he did not wish to use the warrant, but that nevertheless, he wished to question me, and if I did not accompany him and his men willingly, he would have no alternative but to use the warrant, which, he confided, was based on a serious charge, the nature of which seemed to him grossly exaggerated and entirely unmotivated.

I went along willingly enough—all the way to Arkham, in which ancient, gambrel-roofed town I felt strangely at ease and completely unafraid of what was to come. The sheriff was an amiable man who had been driven to this deed, I had not the slightest doubt, by my neighbours. He was almost apologetic, now that I found myself seated opposite him in his office, with a stenographer to take down notes.

He began by wanting to know whether I had been away from the house night before last.

"Not to my knowledge," I answered.

"You could hardly leave your house and not know it."

"If I walked in my sleep, I could."

"Are you in the habit of walking in your sleep?"

"I wasn't before coming here. Since then, I don't know."

He asked seemingly meaningless questions, always skirting the central point of his mission. But this emerged presently. A human being had been seen in charge of a company of some kind of animals, leading the pack to

an attack on a herd of cattle in night pasture. All but two of the cattle had been literally torn to pieces. The cattle had belonged to young Sereno More, and it was he who had made the charge against me, an act in which he was abetted by Bud Perkins, who was even more insistent than Sereno.

Now that he had put the charge into words, it seemed more ridiculous than ever. He himself apparently felt so, for he became more than ever apologetic. I myself could hardly forebear laughing. What motive could I have for so mad an act? And what "animals" could I have led? I owned none, not even a dog or cat.

Nevertheless, the sheriff was politely persistent. How had I come by the scratches visible on my arms?

I seemed to be aware of them for the first time and gazed at them thoughtfully.

Had I been picking berries?

I had, and said so. But I added also that I could not recall having been scratched.

The sheriff seemed relieved at this. He confided that the scene of the attack on the cattle was bordered on one side by a hedge of blackberry bushes, the coincidence of my bearing scratches was bound to be noticed, and he could not ignore it. Nevertheless, he appeared to be satisfied, and, being satisfied that I was no more than I pretended to be, he became somewhat more loquacious; thus I learned that once before a similar event had occurred, with the charge that time being levelled at Seth Bishop, but, like this, it had come to nothing; the Bishop house had been searched, nothing had been found, and the attack was so baseless and unmotivated that no one could be brought to trial on the suspicions, however dark, of the neighbours.

I assured him that I was perfectly willing that my house be searched, and he grinned at this, and told me in all friendliness that it had been searched from roof to cellar while I was in his company, and once again nothing had been found.

Yet when I returned to the house in the valley, I was uneasy and troubled. I tried to keep awake and wait upon events, but this was not to be. I fell asleep, not in the bedroom, but in the store-room, poring over that strange and terrible book in Seth Bishop's hand.

That night I dreamed again, for the first time since my initial dream.

And once again, I dreamed of a vast, amorphous being, which rose out of the water pit in the cavern beyond the passage under the house; but this time it was no misty emanation, this time it was horribly, shockingly real, built of flesh that seemed to have been created out of ancient rock, a vast mountain of matter surmounted by a neckless head, from the lower edges of which great tentacles writhed and curled, reaching out to singular lengths; this came rising out of the waters, while all around it flowed the Deep Ones in an ecstasy of adoration and subservience, and once again, as before, the weirdly beautiful music which had accompanied it rose, and a thousand batrachian throats called harshly *"Iä! Iä! Cthulhu fhtagn!"* in accents of worship.

And once again came the sound of great footfalls below the house, in the bowels of the earth . . .

At this juncture I woke, and to my terror, heard still the subterranean footfalls, and felt the shuddering of the house and the earth in the valley, and heard distantly the incredible music fading away into the depths below the house. In my terror, I ran and burst from the house, running blindly to get away, only to face into still another danger.

Bud Perkins stood there, his rifle aimed at me.

"Where you think you're goin'?" he demanded.

I stopped running, not knowing what to say. Behind me, the house was silent.

"Nowhere," I said finally. Then, my curiosity overcoming my dislike of this gaunt neighbour, I asked, "Did you hear anything, Bud?"

"We all been hearin' it, night after night. Now we're guardin' our stock. You might as well know it. We don't aim to shoot, but if we have to, we'll do it."

"It's not my doing," I said.

" 'Tain't nobody else's," he answered laconically.

I could feel his animosity.

"That's the way it was when Seth Bishop was here. We ain't sure he's not still here."

I felt a curious coldness come over me at his words, and at that instant, the house behind me, for all its looming terrors, seemed more inviting than the darkness outside, where Bud and his neighbours stood vigil with weapons as lethal as anything I might find within those black walls. Perhaps Seth Bishop, too, had met this kind of hatred; perhaps the furniture had

never been moved back into the house because it made a barrier against bullets.

I turned and went back into the house without a further word.

Inside, all was now quiet. There was not a sound anywhere. I had previously thought it somewhat unusual that not a sign of mouse or rat had existed in the abandoned house, knowing how quickly these small animals take over a house; now I would have welcomed the sound of their scampering to and fro or gnawing. But there was nothing, only a deathly, pregnant stillness, as if the house itself knew it was ringed around with grim, determined men armed against a horror they could not know.

It was late when at last I slept that night.

4

MY SENSE OF TIME was not effective in those weeks, as I have already set down. If my memory now serves me rightly, there was a lull of almost a month after that night. I discovered that, gradually, the guards had been withdrawn; only Bud Perkins remained, and he stayed grimly night after night.

It must have been at least five weeks later when I woke from sleep one night and found myself in the passage below the house, walking towards the cellar, away from the yawning chasm at the far end. What had awakened me was a sound to which I was unaccustomed—a screaming which could have come only from a human voice, far behind me. I listened in cold horror, and yet somewhat lethargically, while the screams of fright rose and fell, and were cut off terribly at last. Then I stood for a long time in that place, unable to move forward or back, waiting for a resumption of that frightening sound. But it did not come again, and at last I made my way back to my room and fell exhausted on my bed.

I woke that next morning with a premonition of what was to come.

And in mid-morning, it came. A sullen, hateful mob of men and women, most of them armed. Fortunately, they were in the charge of a deputy-sheriff, who kept them in a semblance of order. Though they had no search warrant, they demanded the right to search the house. In the face of their mood, it would have been folly to deny them; so I made no attempt to do so. I stepped outside and let the door stand open for them. They surged into

the house, and I could hear them going through room after room, upstairs and down, moving and throwing things about. I made no protest, for I was stoutly guarded by three men, one of whom was Obed Marsh, the storekeeper from Aylesbury.

It was to him I finally addressed myself in as calm a voice as I could muster. "May I ask what this is all about?"

"You sayin' you don't know?" he asked scornfully.

"I don't."

"Jared More's boy disappeared last night. Walkin' home from a school party up the road a piece. He had to come by here."

There was nothing I could say. It was patent that they believed the boy had vanished into this house. However much I wanted to protest, I could not rid my thoughts of the memory of that terrible screaming I had heard in the tunnel. I did not know who had screamed, and I knew now that I did not want to learn. I felt reasonably sure that they would not find the entrance to the tunnel, for it was artfully concealed behind shelving in that small cellar space, but from that moment forward I stood in an agony of suspense, for I had little doubt what would happen to me if by some chance anything belonging to the missing boy should be found on the premises.

But again a merciful Providence intervened to prevent my discovery—if there were one to be made; I dared to hope that my own fears were groundless. In truth, I did not know, but horrible doubts were now beginning to assail me. How came I in the tunnel? And whence? When I had awakened, I had been on the way back from the water's edge. What had I done there—and *had I left anything behind?*

By twos and threes, the mob came out of the house again, empty-handed. They were no less sullen, no less angry—but they were somewhat dubious and bewildered. If they had expected to find anything, they were sharply disappointed. If the missing boy had not been taken to the Bishop house, they could not imagine where he might have gone.

Urged by the deputy-sheriff, who had given them their way, they now drew back from the house and began to disperse, all but Bud Perkins and a handful of equally grim men who remained on guard.

Then for days I was aware of the oppressive hatred which was directed towards the Bishop house and its lone occupant.

Thereafter came an interval of comparative quiet.

* * *

And then that final catastrophic night!

It began with faint intimations of something stirring below. I suppose I was subconsciously aware of movement even before I was conscious of it. At the time I was reading in that hellish manuscript book of Seth Bishop's—a page devoted to the minions of Great Cthulhu, the Deep Ones who devoured sacrifice of warm-blooded animals, being themselves cold-blooded, and waxing fat and strong on what would seem a kind of pagan cannibalism; I was reading this, I say, when without warning I became conscious of the stirrings below, as if the very earth were becoming animated, trembling faintly, rhythmically, and there began immediately thereafter a faint, far-away music, exactly similar to that which I had heard in my first dream in that house, rising from instruments unknown to human hands, but resembling a fluting or piping sound heard in chorus, and accompanied once more by an occasional ululation which came from the throat of some living entity.

I cannot adequately describe the effect which this had on me. At the moment, engrossed as I was in an account clearly related to the events of the past weeks, I was, as it were, conditioned to such an occurrence, but my state of mind was one of nothing short of exaltation, and I was filled with a compelling urgency to rise and serve Him who lay dreaming far below. Almost as in a dream, I put out the light in the store-room, and slipped out in darkness, possessed by caution against the enemies who waited beyond the walls.

As yet, the music was too faint to be heard outside the house. I had no way of knowing how long it would remain so faint; so I made haste to do that which was expected of me before the enemy could be warned that the dwellers in the watery chasm below were once again rising towards the house in the valley. But it was not to the cellar that I moved. As if by pre-ordained plan, I slipped out the back door of the house and made my way stealthily in the darkness to the protecting shrubbery and trees.

There I began to make slow but steady progress forward. Somewhere up ahead Bud Perkins stood on guard . . .

Of what happened after that, I cannot be sure.

The rest was nightmare, certainly. Before I reached Bud Perkins, two shots rang out. That was his signal to the others to come. I was less than a

foot away from him in the darkness, and his shots startled me out of my wits. He, too, had heard the sounds from below, for now I could hear them outside in this darkness as well.

So much I remember with reasonable clarity.

It was what happened after that that baffles me even now. Certainly the mob came, and if the men from the sheriff's office had not been waiting, too, I would not now be alive to make this deposition. I remember the screaming, furious mob; I remember that they set fire to the house. I had been back there, I had run out, escaping the flames. From where I looked back I saw not only the flames, but that other sight—those shrilly crying Deep Ones, falling victim to flame and terror, and at the last that gigantic being which reared up out of the flames flailing its tentacles, before it dropped defiantly back down, compacting into a great sinuous column of flesh, and vanished without trace! It was then that someone in the mob threw dynamite into the flaming house. But even before the echo of the blast died away, I heard, as did all the others encircling all that remained of the Bishop house, that chanting voice which cried, *"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn!"*—announcing to all the world that Great Cthulhu still lay dreaming in his subaqueous haven of R'lyeh!

They said of me that I was crouched beside the torn remains of Bud Perkins, and they intimated hideous things. Yet they must have seen, even as I saw, what writhed in that flaming ruin, though they deny that there was anything at all there but myself. What they say I was doing is too horrible to repeat. It is the fiction of their diseased, hate-filled brains, for surely they cannot deny the evidence of their own senses. They witnessed against me in court, and sealed my doom.

Surely they must understand that it was not I who did all the things they say I did! Surely they must know that it was the life-force of Seth Bishop, which invaded and took possession of me, which again restored that unholy link to those creatures of the deep, bringing them their food, as in the days when Seth Bishop had an existence in a body of his own and served them, even as the Deep Ones and those countless others scattered over the face of the earth, Seth Bishop who did what they say I did to Bud Perkins' sheep and Jared More's boy and all those missing animals and finally to Bud Perkins himself, for all that he made them believe it was I, for I could not have done

such things, it was Seth Bishop come back from hell to serve again those hideous beings who came to his watery pit from the depths of the sea, Seth Bishop, who had discovered their existence and summoned them to do his bidding and who lived to serve them in his own time and in mine, and who may still lurk deep in earth below that place where the house stood in the valley, waiting for another vessel to inhabit and to serve them in time to come, forever.



MY PATERNAL GRANDFATHER, whom I never saw except in a darkened room, used to say of me to my parents, "Keep him away from the sea!" as if I had some reason to fear water, when, in fact, I have always been drawn to it. But those born under one of the water signs—mine is Pisces—have a natural affinity for water, so much is well known. They are said to be psychic, too, but that is another matter, perhaps. At any rate, that was my grandfather's judgement; a strange man, whom I could not have described to save my soul—though that, in the light of day, is an ambiguity indeed! That was before my father was killed in an automobile accident, and afterwards it was never said in vain, for my mother kept me back in the hills, well away from the sight and sound and the smells of the sea.

But what is meant to be will be. I was in college in a midwestern city when my mother died, and the week after that, my Uncle Sylvan died, too, leaving everything he had to me. Him I had never seen. He was the eccentric one of the family, the queer one, the black sheep; he was known by a variety of names, and disparaged in all of them, except by my grandfather, who did not speak of him at all without sighing. I was, in fact, the last of my grandfather's direct line; there was a great-uncle living somewhere—in Asia, I al-

ways understood, though what he did there no one seemed to know, except that it had something to do with the sea, shipping, perhaps—and so it was only natural that I should inherit my Uncle Sylvan's places.

For he had two, and both, as luck would have it, were on the sea, one in a Massachusetts town called Innsmouth, and the other isolated on the coast well above that town. Even after the inheritance taxes, there was enough money to make it unnecessary for me to go back to college, or to do anything I had no mind to do, and the only thing I had a mind to do was that which had been forbidden me for these twenty-two years, to go to the sea, perhaps to buy a sailboat or a yacht or whatever I liked.

But that was not quite the way it was to be. I saw the lawyer in Boston and went on to Innsmouth. A strange town, I found it. Not friendly, though there were those who smiled when they learned who I was, smiled with a strange, secretive air, as if they knew something they would not say of my Uncle Sylvan. Fortunately, the place at Innsmouth was the lesser of his places; it was plain that he had not occupied it much; it was a dreary, sombre old mansion, and I discovered, much to my surprise, that it was the family homestead, having been built by my great-grandfather, who had been in the China trade, and lived in by my grandfather for a good share of his life, and the name of Phillips was still held in a kind of awe in that town.

No, it was the other place in which my Uncle Sylvan had spent most of his life. He was only fifty when he died, but he had lived much like my grandfather; he had not been seen about much, being seldom away from that darkly overgrown house which crowned a rocky bluff on the coast above Innsmouth. It was not a lovely house, not such a one as would call to the lover of beauty, but it had its own attraction, nevertheless, and I felt it at once. I thought of it as a house that belonged to the sea, for the sound of the Atlantic was always in it, and trees shut it from the land, while to the sea it was open, its wide windows looking ever east. It was not an old house, like that other—thirty years, I was told—though it had been built by my uncle himself on the site of a far older house that had belonged to my great-grandfather, too.

It was a house of many rooms, but of them all the great central study was the only room to remember. Though all the rest of the house was of one storey, rambling away from that central room, that room had the height of two storeys, and was sunken besides, with its walls covered with books and

all manner of curios, particularly outré and suggestive carvings and sculptures, paintings and masks which came from many places of the world, but especially from the Polynesias, from Aztec, Maya, and Inca country, and from ancient Indian tribes in the northwest coastal areas of the North American continent—a fascinating and ever-provocative collection which had originally been begun by my grandfather, and continued and added to by my Uncle Sylvan. A great hand-made rug, bearing a strange octopoid design, covered the centre of the floor, and all the furniture in the room was set between the walls and the centre of it; nothing at all stood on that rug.

There was above all else a symbolization in the décor of the house. Here and there, woven into rugs—beginning with that great round rug in the central room—into hangings, on plaques—was a design which seemed to be of a singularly perplexing seal, a round, disc-like pattern bearing on it a crude likeness of the astronomical symbol of Aquarius, the Water-Carrier—a likeness that might have been drawn remote ages ago, when the shape of Aquarius was not as it is today—surmounting a hauntingly indefinite suggestion of a buried city, against which, in the precise centre of the disc, was imposed an indescribable figure that was at once icthyic and saurian, simultaneously octopoid and semi-human, which, though drawn in miniature, was clearly intended to represent a colossus in someone's imagination. Finally, in letters so fine that the eye could hardly read them, the disc was ringed round with meaningless words in a language I could not read, though far down inside of me it seemed to strike a common chord—*Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.*

That this curious design should have exercised upon me from the beginning the strongest possible attraction did not seem at all strange, though its significance did not come to me until later. Nor could I account for the unimaginably strong pull of the sea; though I had never before set foot in this place, I had the most vivid impression of having returned home. Never, in all my years, had my parents taken me east; I had not before been east of Ohio, and the closest I had come to any substantial body of water had been in brief visits to Lake Michigan or Lake Huron. That this undeniable attraction existed so patently I laid quite naturally to ancestral memory—had not my forebears lived by the sea, on it and beside it? For how many generations? Two of which I knew, and perhaps more before that. They had been mariners for generations, until something happened that caused my grand-

father to strike far inland, and to shun the sea thereafter, and cause it to be shunned by all who came after him.

I mention this now because its meaning comes clear in all that happened afterwards, which I am dedicated to setting down before I am gone to be among my own people again. The house and the sea drew me; together they were home, and gave more meaning to that word even than the haven I had shared so fondly with my doting parents only a few years before. A strange thing—and yet, stranger still, I did not think it so at the time; it seemed the most natural occurrence, and I did not question it.

Of what manner of man my Uncle Sylvan was, I had no way of knowing at once. I did find an early portrait of him, done by an amateur photographer. It was a likeness of an unusually grave young man, surely not more than twenty, to judge by his appearance, and of an aspect which, while not exactly unattractive, was doubtless repellant to many people, for he had a face which suggested something more than just the humanness of him—with his somewhat flat nose, his very wide mouth, his strangely basilisk eyes. There was no more recent photograph of him, but there were people who remembered him from the years when he still walked or drove into Innsmouth to shop, as I learned on a day I stepped into Asa Clarke's store to buy my supplies for the week.

"Ye're a Phillips?" asked the aged proprietor.

I admitted that I was.

"Son of Sylvan?"

"My uncle never married," I said.

"We've had naught but his word for that," he replied. "Then ye'll be Jared's son. How is he?"

"Dead."

The old man shook his head. "Dead, too, eh?—the last of that generation, then. And you . . ."

"I'm the last of mine."

"The Phillipses were once high and mighty hereabouts. An old family—but ye'll know it."

I said I did not. I had come from the midwest, and had little knowledge of my forebears.

"That so?" He gazed at me for a moment almost in disbelief. "Well, the Phillipses go back about as far as the Marshes. The two were in business

long ago, together. China trade. Shipped from here and Boston for the Orient—Japan, China, the islands—and they brought back—" But here he stopped, his face paled a little, and he shrugged. "Many things. Aye, many things indeed." He gave me a baffling look. "Ye figurin' to stay hereabouts?"

I told him I had inherited and moved into my uncle's place on the coast. I was now looking for servants to staff it.

"Ye'll not find 'em," he said, shaking his head. "The place is too far up the coast, and much disliked. If any more of the Phillipses were left—" He spread his hands helplessly. "But most of them died in '28, that time of the explosions and the fire. Still, ye might find a Marsh or two who'd do for you; they're still about. Not so many of 'em died that night."

With this oblique and mystifying reference I was not then concerned. My first thought was of someone to help me at my uncle's house. "Marsh," I repeated. "Can you name one and give me his address."

"There is one," he said thoughtfully, and then smiled, as if to himself.

That was how I came to meet Ada Marsh.

She was twenty-five, but there were days when she looked much younger, and other days when she looked older. I went to her home, found her, asked her to come to work for me days. She had a car of her own, even if but an old-fashioned Model T; she could drive up and back; and the prospect of working in what she called strangely, "Sylvan's hiding," seemed to appeal to her. Indeed, she seemed almost eager to come, and promised to come that day still, if I wished her to. She was not a good-looking girl, but, like my uncle, she was strangely attractive to me, however much she may have turned others away; there was a certain charm about her wide, flat-lipped mouth, and her eyes, which were undeniably cold, seemed often very warm to me.

She came the following morning, and it was plain to me that she had been in the house before, for she walked about as if she knew it.

"You have been here before!" I challenged her.

"The Marshes and the Phillipses are old friends," she said, and looked at me as if I must have known. And indeed, I felt at that moment as if I did certainly know it was just as she said. "Old, old friends—as old, Mr. Phillips, as the earth itself is old. As old as the water-carrier and the water."

She, too, was strange. She had been here, as a guest of Uncle Sylvan, I found out, more than once. Now, without hesitation, she had come to work

for me, and with such a curious smile on her lips—"as old as the water-carrier and the water"—which made me to think of the design which lay all about us, and for the first time, I now believe, thinking back upon it, implanting in me a certain feeling of uneasiness; for the second moment of it was but a few words away.

"Have you heard, Mr. Phillips?" she asked then.

"Heard what?" I asked.

"If you had heard, you would not need to be told."

But her real purpose was not to come to work for me, I soon found out; it was to have access to the house, as I learned when I came back up from the beach ahead of schedule, and found her engrossed not in work, but in a systematic and detailed search of the great central room. I watched her for a while—how she moved books, leafed through them; how she carefully lifted the pictures on the walls, the sculptures on the shelves, looking into every place where something might be hidden. I went back and slammed the door then; so that when I walked into the study, she was at work dusting, quite as if she had never been at anything else.

It was my impulse to speak, but I foresaw that it would not do to tip my hand. If she sought something, perhaps I could find it first. So I said nothing, and that evening, after she had gone, I took up where she had stopped, not knowing what to look for, but being able to estimate something of its size by the very fact of the places into which she had looked. Something compact, small, hardly larger than a book itself.

Could it be a book? I asked myself repeatedly that night.

For, of course, I found nothing, though I sought until midnight, and gave up only when I was exhausted, satisfied that I had gone farther in my search than Ada could go on the morrow, even if she had most of the day. I sat down to rest in one of the overstuffed chairs ranged close to the walls in that room, and there had my first hallucination—I call it so for want of a better, more precise word. For I was far from sleep when I heard a sound that was like nothing so much as the susurrus of some great beast's breathing; and, wakened in a trice, was sure that the house itself, and the rock on which it sat, and the sea lapping at the rocks below were at one in breathing, like various parts of one great sentient being, and I felt as I had often felt when looking at the paintings of certain contemporary artists—Dale Nichols in particular—who have seen earth and the contours of the land as represen-

tative of a great sleeping man or woman—felt as if I rested on chest or belly or forehead of a being so vast I could not comprehend its vastness.

I do not remember how long the illusion lasted. I kept thinking of Ada Marsh's question, "Have you heard?" Was it this she meant? For surely the house and the rock on which it stood were alive, and as restless as the sea that flowed away to the horizon to the east. I sat experiencing the illusion for a long time. Did the house actually tremble as if in respiration? I believed it did, and at the time I laid it to some flaw in its structure, and accounted in its strange movement and sounds for the reluctance of other natives to work for me.

On the third day I confronted Ada in the midst of her search.

"What are you looking for, Ada?" I asked.

She measured me with the utmost candour, and decided that I had seen her thus before.

"Your uncle was in search of something I thought maybe he had found. I too am interested in it. Perhaps you would be, too, if you knew. You are like us—you are one of us—of the Marshes and the Phillipses before you."

"What would it be?"

"A notebook, a diary, a journal, papers . . ." She shrugged. "Your uncle spoke very little of it to me, but I know. He was gone very often, long periods at a time. Where was he then? Perhaps he had reached his goal. For he never went away by road."

"Perhaps I can find it."

She shook her head. "You know too little. You are like . . . an outsider."

"Will you tell me?"

"No. Who speaks so to one too young to understand? No, Mr. Phillips, I will say nothing. You are not ready."

I resented this, and I resented her. Yet I did not ask her to leave. Her attitude was a provocation and a challenge.

2

TWO DAYS LATER I came upon that which Ada Marsh sought.

My Uncle Sylvan's papers were concealed in a place where Ada Marsh had looked first—behind a shelf of curious occult books, but set into a secret recess there, which I happened to open only by clumsy chance. A jour-

nal of sorts, and many scraps and sheets of paper covered with tiny script in what I recognized as my uncle's hand. I took them at once to my own room and locked myself in, as if I feared that at this hour, at dead of night, Ada Marsh might come for them. An absurd thing to do—for I not only did not fear her, but actually was drawn to her far more than I would have dreamed I might be when first I met her.

Beyond question, the discovery of the papers represented a turning point in my existence. Say that my first twenty-two years were static, on a waiting plane; say that the early days at my Uncle Sylvan's coast house were a time of suspension between that earlier plane and that which was to come; the turning point came surely with my discovery—and yes, reading—of the papers.

But what was I to make of the first paragraph on which I gazed?

"Subt. Cont. Shelf. Northernmost end at Inns., stretching all the way around to vic. Singapore. Orig. source off Ponape? A. suggests R. in Pacific, vic. of Ponape; E. holds R. nr. Inns. Maj. writers suggest it in depths. Could R. occupy entire Cont. shelf from Inns. to Singapore?"

That was the first. The second was even more baffling.

"C. who waits dreaming in R. is all in all, and everywhere. He is in R. at Inns. and at Ponape, he is among the islands and in the depths. How are the Deep Ones related? And where did Obed. and Cyrus make the first contact? Ponape or one of the lesser islands? And how? On land or in the water?"

But my uncle's papers were not alone in that treasure trove. There were other, even more disturbing revelations. The letter, for instance, from the Rev. Jabez Lovell Phillips to some unnamed person, dated over a century before, in which he wrote:

"On a certain day in August of 1797, Capt. Obediah Marsh, accompanied by his First Mate Cyrus Alcott Phillips, reported their ship, the *Cory*, lost with all hands in the Marquesas. The Captain and his First Mate arrived in Innsmouth harbour in a rowboat, yet did not seem any the worse for weather or wear, despite having covered a distance of many thousands of miles in a craft deemed well nigh impossible of having carried them so far. Thereafter began in Innsmouth such a series of happenings as were to make the settlement accursed within one generation, for a strange race was born to the Marshes and the Phillipses, a blight was fallen upon their families which followed after the appearance of women—and how came they there?—who

were the wives of the Captain and his First Mate, and loosed upon Innsmouth a spawn of Hell that no man has found it possible to put down, and against whom all the appeals to Heaven I have made no avail.

"What disports in the waters off Innsmouth in the late hours of darkness? Mermaids, say some. Faugh, what idiocy! Mermaids, indeed. What, if not the accursed spawn of the Marsh and Phillips tribes . . ."

Of this I read no more, being curiously shaken. I turned next to my uncle's journal, and found the last entry:

"R. is as I thought. Next time I shall see C. himself, where he lies in the depths, waiting upon the day to come forth once more."

But there had been no next time for Uncle Sylvan—only death. There were entries before this one, many of them; clearly, my uncle wrote of matters beyond my knowledge. He wrote of Cthulhu and R'lyeh, of Hastur and Lloigor, of Shub-Niggurath and Yog-Sothoth, of the Plateau of Leng, of the *Sussex Fragments* and the *Necronomicon*, of the Marsh Drift and the Abominable Snowmen—but, most often of all, he wrote of R'lyeh, and of Great Cthulhu—the "R." and the "C." of his papers—and of his abiding search for them, for my uncle, as was made plain in his own handwriting, was in search of these places or beings. I could hardly distinguish one from the other in the way he set down his thoughts, for his notes and his journal were written for no other eyes but his own, and he alone understood them, for I had no frame of reference upon which to draw.

There was, too, a crude map drawn by some hand before my Uncle Sylvan's, for it was old and badly creased; it fascinated me, though I had no genuine understanding of its real worth. It was a rough map of the world—but not of that world I knew or had learned about in my studies; rather of a world that existed only in the imagination of him who had made the map. For deep in the heart of Asia, for instance, the mapmaker had fixed the "Pl. Leng," and, above this, near what ought to have been Mongolia, "Kadath in the Cold Waste," which was specified as "in space-time continua; coterminous," and in the sea about the Polynesias, he had indicated the "Marsh Drift," which, I gathered, was a break in the ocean floor. Devil Reef off Innsmouth was indicated, too, and so was Ponape—these were recognizable; but the majority of place-names on that fabulous map were utterly alien to me.

I hid the things I had found where I was sure Ada Marsh would not think of looking for them, and I returned, late though the hour was to the

central room. And there I sought out, as if by instinct, unerringly, the shelf behind which the things I had found had been concealed. There were some of the things mentioned in Uncle Sylvan's notes—the *Sussex Fragments*, the Pnakotic Manuscripts, the *Cultes des Goules* by the Comte d'Erlette, the *Book of Eibon*, Von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, and many others. But alas! most of them were in Latin or Greek, which I could not read well, however ably I could struggle through French or German. Yet I found enough in those pages to fill me with wonder and terror, with horror and a strangely exhilarating excitement, as if I had realized that my Uncle Sylvan had bequeathed me not only his house and property, but his quest and the lore of eons before the time of man.

For I sat reading until the morning sun invaded the room and paled the lamps I had lit—reading about the Great Old Ones, who were first among the universes, and the Elder Gods, who fought and vanquished the rebellious Ancient Ones—who were Great Cthulhu, the Water-Dweller; Hastur, who reposed at the Lake of Hali in the Hyades; Yog-Sothoth, the All-in-One and One-in-All; Ithaqua, the Wind-Walker; Lloigor, the Star-Treader; Cthugha, who abides in fire; great Azathoth—all of whom had been vanquished and exiled to outer spaces against the coming of another day in far time yet to come, when they could rise with their followers and once again vanquish the races of mankind and challenge the Elder Gods; of their minions—the Deep Ones of the seas and the watery places on Earth, the Dholes, the Abominable Snowmen of Tibet and the hidden Plateau of Leng, the Shantaks, who flew from Kadath in the Cold Waste at the bidding of Wind-Walker, the Wendigo, cousin of Ithaqua; of their rivalries, one and yet divided. I read all this and more—damnably more: the collection of newspaper clippings of inexplicable happenings, accounted for by my Uncle Sylvan as evidence of the truth in which he believed. And in the pages of these books was more of the curious language I had found woven into the decorations of my uncle's house—*Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn*—which was translated, I read in more than one of these accounts, as: "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu lies dreaming . . ."

And my uncle's quest was surely nothing more than to find R'lyeh, the sunken subaqueous place of Cthulhu!

In the cold light of day, I challenged my own conclusions. Could my Uncle Sylvan have believed in such a panoply of myths? Or was his pursuit

merely the quest of a man steeped in idleness? My uncle's library consisted of many books, ranging through the world's literature; yet one considerable section of his shelving was given over completely to books on occult subjects, books of strange beliefs and even stranger facts, inexplicable to science, books on little-known religious cults; and these were supplemented by huge scrapbooks of clippings from newspapers and magazines, reading which filled me at one and the same time with a sense of premonitory dread and a flame of compulsive joy. For in these prosaically reported facts there lay oddly convincing evidence to augment belief in the myth-pattern to which my uncle had patently subscribed.

After all, the pattern in itself was not new. All religious beliefs, all myth-patterns, in no matter what systems of culture, are basically familiar—they are predicated upon a struggle between forces of good and forces of evil. This pattern was part, too, of my uncle's mythos—the Great Old Ones and the Elder Gods, who may, for all I could figure out, have been the same, represented primal good; the Ancient Ones, primal evil. As in many cultures, the Elder Gods were not often named; the Ancient Ones were, and often, for they were still worshipped and served by followers throughout earth and among the planetary spaces; and they were aligned not only against the Elder Gods, but also against one another in a ceaseless struggle for ultimate dominion. They were in brief, representations of elemental forces, and each had his element—Cthulhu of water, Cthugha of fire, Ithaqua of air, Hastur of interplanetary spaces; and others among them belonged to great primal forces—Shub-Niggurath, the Messenger of the Gods, of fertility; Yog-Sothoth, of the time-space continua, Azathoth—in a sense the fountainhead of evil.

Was this pattern after all not familiar? The Elder Gods could so easily have become the Christian Trinity; the Ancient Ones could for most believers have been altered into Sathanus and Beelzebub, Mephistopheles and Azarael. Except that they were co-existent, which disturbed me, though I knew that systems of belief constantly overlapped in the history of mankind.

More—there was certain evidence to show that the Cthulhu myth-pattern had existed not only long before the Christian mythos, but also before that of ancient China and the dawn of mankind, surviving unchanged in remote areas of the earth—among the Tcho-Tcho people of Tibet, and

the Abominable Snowmen of the high plateaux of Asia, and a strange sea-dwelling people known as the Deep Ones, who were amphibian hybrids, bred of ancient matings between humanoids and batrachia, mutant developments of the race of man—surviving with recognizable facets in newer religious symbols—in Quetzalcoatl and others among the Gods of Aztec, Mayan, and Inca religions; in the idols of Easter Island; in the ceremonial masks of the Polynesians and the Northwest Coast Indians, where the tentacle and octopoid shape which were the marks of Cthulhu persisted—so that in a sense it might be said that the Cthulhu mythos was primal.

Even putting all this into the realm of theory and speculation, I was left with the tremendous amounts of clippings which my uncle had collected. These prosaic newspaper accounts served perhaps more effectively in giving pause to any doubt I might have had because all were so palpably reportorial, for none of my uncle's clippings derived from any sensational source, all came straight from news columns or magazines offering factual material only, like the *National Geographic*. So that I was left asking myself certain searching questions.

What did happen to Johansen and the ship *Emma* if not what he himself set forth? Was any other explanation possible?

And why did the U.S. Government send destroyers and submarines to depth-bomb the ocean about Devil Reef outside the harbour of Innsmouth? And arrest scores of Innsmouth people who were never afterwards seen again? And fire the coastal area, destroying scores of others? Why—if it were not true that strange rites were being observed by Innsmouth people who bore a hellish relationship to certain sea-dwellers seen by night at Devil Reef?

And what happened to Wilmarth in the mountain country of Vermont, when he came too close to the truth in his research into the cults of the Ancient Ones? And to certain writers of what purported to be fiction—Lovecraft, Howard, Barlow—and what purported to be science—like Fort—when they came too close to truth? Dead, all of them. Dead or missing, like Wilmarth. Dead before their time, most of them, while still comparatively young men. My uncle had their books—though only Lovecraft and Fort had been extensively published in book form—and they were opened by me and read, with greater perturbation than ever, for the fictions of H. P. Lovecraft had, it seemed to me, the same relation to truth as the

facts, so inexplicable to science, reported by Charles Fort. If fiction, Lovecraft's tales were damnably bound to fact—even dismissing Fort's facts, the fact inherent in the myths of mankind; they were quasi-myths themselves, as was the untimely fate of their author, whose early death had already given rise to a score of legends, from among which prosaic fact was ever more and more difficult to discover.

But there was time for me to delve into the secrets of my uncle's books, to read further into his notes. So much was clear—he had belief enough to have begun a search for sunken R'lyeh, the city or the kingdom—one could not be sure which it was, or whether indeed it ringed half the earth from the coast of Massachusetts in the Atlantic to the Polynesian Islands on the Pacific—to which Cthulhu had been banished, dead and yet not dead—"Dead Cthulhu lies dreaming!"—as it read in more than one account, waiting, biding his time to rise and rebel again, to strike once more for dominion against the rule of the Elder Gods, for a world and universes of his own persuasion—for is it not true that if evil triumphs, then evil becomes the law of life, and it is good that must be fought, the rule of the majority establishing the norm, and other than that being abnormal, or, by the way of mankind, the bad, the abhorrent?

My uncle had sought R'lyeh, and he had written disturbingly of how he had done so. He had gone down into the Atlantic's depths, from his home here on the coast, gone down off Devil Reef and beyond. But there was no mention of how he had done so. By diving equipment? Bathysphere? Of these I had found no evidence whatsoever at the house. It was on these explorations that he had gone during those periods when he had been so long missing from the house on the coast. And yet there had been no mention of any kind of craft, either, nor had my uncle left any such thing in his estate.

If R'lyeh was the object of my uncle's search, what then was Ada Marsh's? This remained to be seen, and to the end of discovering it, I allowed some of my uncle's least informative notes to lie on the library table on the following day. I managed to watch her when she came upon them, and I was left in no doubt, by her reaction, that this was the object of her search—the cache I had found. She had known of these papers. But how?

I confronted her. Even before I had a chance to speak, she spoke.

"You found them!" she cried.

"How did you know about them?"

"I knew what he was doing."

"The search?"

She nodded.

"You can't believe," I protested.

"How can you be so stupid?" she cried angrily. "Did your parents tell you nothing? Your grandfather? How could you have been raised in darkness?" She came close to me, thrust the papers in her hand at me, and demanded, "Let me see the rest of them."

I shook my head.

"Please! They are of no use to you."

"We shall see."

"Tell me, then—he had begun the search?"

"Yes. But I do not know how. There is neither a diver's suit nor a boat."

At this she favoured me with a glance which was a challenging mingling of pity and contempt.

"You have not even read all he had written! You haven't read the books—nothing. Do you know what you're standing on?"

"This rug?" I asked wonderingly.

"No, no—the design, the pattern. It's everywhere. Don't you know why? Because it is the great seal of R'lyeh. So much at least he discovered years ago, and was proud to emblazon it here. You stand on what you seek! Look further and find his ring."

3

AFTER ADA MARSH LEFT that day, I turned once more to my uncle's papers. I did not leave them until long past midnight, but by that time I had gone through most of them cursorily, and some of them with the closest attention. I found it difficult to believe what I read, yet clearly my Uncle Sylvan had not only believed it, but seemed actually to have taken some part in it himself. He had dedicated himself early in life to the search for the sunken kingdom, he professed openly a devotion to Cthulhu, and, most suggestive of all, his writings contained many times chilling hints of encounters—sometimes in the ocean's depths, sometimes in the streets of legend-haunted Arkham, an ancient, gambrel-roofed town which lay inland from Innsmouth, not far from the coast along the Miskatonic River, or in nearby

Dunwich, or even Innsmouth—with men—or beings which were not men—I could hardly tell which—who believed as he did and were bound in the same dark bondage to this resurgent myth from the distant past.

And yet, despite my iconoclasm, there was, too, an edge of belief I could not diminish. Perhaps it was because of the strange insinuations in his notes—the half-statements, which were meant only for reference to his own knowledge, and thus never clear, for he referred to something he knew too well to set down—the insinuations about the unhallowed marriages of Obediah Marsh and "three others"—could there have been a Phillips among them?—and the subsequent discovery of photographs of the Marsh women, Obediah's widow—a curiously flat-faced woman, very dark of skin, with a wide, thin-lipped mouth—the younger Marshes, all of whom resembled their mother—together with odd references to their curious hopping gait, so much a characteristic of "those who descended from those who came back alone from the sinking of the *Cory*," as Uncle Sylvan put it. What he meant to say was unmistakable—Obediah Marsh had married in Ponape a woman who was not a Polynesian, yet lived there, and belonged to a sea-race which was only semi-human, and his children and his children's children had borne the stigmata of that marriage, which had in turn led to the holocaust visited upon Innsmouth in 1928, and to the destruction of so many members of the old Innsmouth families. Though my uncle wrote in the most casual manner, there was horror behind his words, and the echo of disaster rolled out from behind the sentences and paragraphs of his writing.

For those of whom he wrote were allied to the Deep Ones; like them, they were amphibious creatures. Of how far the accursed taint went, he did not speculate, nor was there ever word to settle his own status in relation to them. Captain Obediah Marsh—presumably also Cyrus Phillips, and two others of the *Cory*'s crew who had remained behind in Ponape—certainly shared none of the curious traits of their wives and children; but whether the taint went beyond their children, none could say. Was it this Ada Marsh had meant when she had said to me, "You are one of us!" Or had she reference to some even darker secret? Presumably my grandfather's abhorrence of the sea was due to his knowledge of his father's deeds; he, at least, had successfully resisted the dark heritage.

But my uncle's papers were on the one hand too diffuse to make a coherent account, and on the other too plain to enlist immediate belief. What

disturbed me immediately most of all were the repeated hints that his home, this house, was a "haven," a "point" of contact, an "opening to that which lies below"; and the speculations about the "breathing" of the house and the rocky bluff which were so often to be found in the early pages of his notes, and to which no reference whatsoever was made later on. What he had set down was baffling and challenging, fearsome and wonderful; it filled me with awe and at one and the same time an angry disbelief and a wild wish to believe, to know.

I sought everywhere to find out, but was only baffled the more. People in Innsmouth were close-mouthed; some of them actually shunned me—crossed the street at my approach, and in the Italian district frankly crossed themselves as if to ward off the evil eye. No one offered any information, and even at the public library I could obtain no books or records which might help, for these, the librarian told me, had been confiscated and destroyed by government men after the fire and explosions of 1928. I sought in other places—I learned even darker secrets at Arkham and Dunwich, and in the great library of Miskatonic University found at last the fountainhead of all books of dark lore: the half-fabled *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred, which I was allowed to read only under the watchful eye of a librarian's assistant.

It was then, two weeks after my discovery of my uncle's papers, that I found his ring. This was where one would least have expected to find it, and yet where it was bound to be—in a small packet of his personal belongings returned to the house by the undertaker and left unwrapped in his bureau drawer. The ring was of silver, a massive thing, inlaid with a milky stone which resembled pearl, but was not, and inlaid with the seal of R'lyeh.

I examined it closely. There was nothing extraordinary about it, save its size—to look upon; the wearing of it, however, carried with it unimaginable results. For I had no sooner put it on my finger than it was as if new dimensions opened up to me—or as if the old horizons were pushed back limitlessly. All my senses were made more acute. The very first thing I noticed was my awareness of the susurrus of the house and the rock, now one with the sea's slow movement; so that it was as if the house and the rock were rising and falling with the movement of the water, and it seemed as if I heard from below the house itself the rushing and retreating of water.

At the same time, and perhaps even more importantly, I was aware of a

psychic awakening. With the assumption of the ring, I became cognizant of the pressure of unseen forces, potent beyond the telling, as were this house the focal point of influences beyond my comprehension; I stood, in short, as were I a magnet to draw elemental forces from all about me, and these rushed in upon me with such impress that I felt like an island in the midst of the sea, with a raging hurricane centred upon it, a tempestuous tearing at me until I heard almost with relief the very real sound of a horrible, animal-like voice rising in a ghastly ululation—not from above or beside me, but from below!

I tore the ring from my finger, and at once all subsided. The house and the rock returned to quiet and solitude; the winds and the waters which had moved all about me faded and died away; the voice I had heard retreated and was still; the extrasensory perception I had experienced was ended, and once more all seemed to lie waiting upon my further act. So my dead uncle's ring was a talisman and a ring of wizardry; it was the key to his knowledge and the door to other realms of being.

It was by means of the ring that I discovered my uncle's way to the sea. I had long sought the path by which he went to the beach, but there was none sufficiently worn to suggest its constant use. There were paths down the rocky declivity; in some places steps had been cut long ago, so that a man could reach the water from the house on the promontory, but there was nowhere a place that might have been used for landing craft. The shore here was deep; I swam in the waters there several times, always with a wild sense of exultation, so great was my pleasure in the sea; but there were many rocks, and such beach as there was lay away from the promontory, around the coves, either to north or south, almost too great a distance to swim, unless one were a very capable swimmer, such as I learned—somewhat to my surprise—that I was.

I had meant to ask Ada Marsh about the ring. It was she who had told me of its existence, but ever since that day I had refused her access to my uncle's papers, she had stopped coming to the house. True, I had seen her lurking about from time to time, or spied her car parked along the road which led past my property rather far to the west of the house, and so knew that she prowled the vicinity. Once I had gone into Innsmouth to look for her, but she was not at her home, and my inquiries brought me only open hostility from most of the populace, and sly, meaningful glances I could not

correctly interpret from others—those shambling, half-derelict people who lived along the coast streets and byways.

So it was not due to her help that I found my uncle's way to the sea. I had put on the ring one day, and, drawn to the sea, was bent on climbing down to the water's edge, when I found myself, while in the act of crossing the great central room of the house, virtually unable to leave it, so strong was its pull upon the ring. I ceased to try, presently, recognizing that a psychic force was manifest, and simply stood, waiting for guidance; so that, when I was impelled towards a singularly repellant work of carved wood, a primitive piece representing some hideous batrachian hybrid, affixed to a pedestal along one wall of the study, I yielded to impulse, went over to it, seized hold of it, and pushed, pulled, and finally turned it right and left. It gave to the left.

Instantly there was a creaking of chains, a clanking of gears, and the entire section of the study floor covered by the rug bearing the seal of R'lyeh came up like a great trapdoor. I went wonderingly over to it, my pulse quickening with excitement. And I looked down into the pit below—a great, yawning depth, into the darkness of which a continuing spiral of steps had been hewn out of the solid rock upon which the house stood. Did it lead to water below? I selected a book at random from my uncle's set of Dumas and dropped it; then I stood listening for any sound from below. It came at last: a splash—distantly.

So, with the utmost caution, I crept down the interminable stairs, down into the smell of the sea—small wonder I had felt that the sea was in the house!—down into the dank coolness of a watery place, until I could feel the moisture on the walls and the steps underfoot, down into the sound of restless water below, the sloshing and rushing of the sea, until I came to where the stairs ended, at the very edge of the water, in a kind of cavern that was large enough to have held the entire house in which my Uncle Sylvan had lived. And I knew beyond cavil that this was my uncle's way to the sea, this and no other; though I was as mystified as ever to find even here no evidence of boat or diving gear, but only footprints—and, seen in the light of the matches I struck, something more—the long, slithered marks and the blobs where some monstrous entity had rested, marks which made me to think with prickling scalp and goose-fleshed skin of some of those hideous

representations brought to the great room above me by my Uncle Sylvan and others before him from the mysterious islands of Polynesia.

How long I stood there, I do not know. For there, at the water's edge, with the ring bearing the seal of R'lyeh on my finger, I heard from the depths of the water below sounds of movement and life, coming from a great distance indeed, from outwards which is to say, from the direction of the sea, and from below, so that I suspected the existence of some sort of passage to the sea, either immediately at hand, by means of a subaqueous cavern, or below this level, for the cavern in which I stood was ringed around, so far as I could see in the wan glow of the matches I lit, with solid rock, and the movement of the water indicated the movement of the sea, which could not have been coincidental. So the opening was outward, and I must find it without delay.

I climbed back up the stairs, closed the opening once more, and hurried to my car for a journey to Boston. I returned late that night with a diving helmet and a portable oxygen tank, ready to descend next day into the sea below the house. I removed the ring no more, and that night I dreamed great dreams of ancient lore, of cities on distant stars and magnificent spired settlements in far, fabulous places of the earth—in the unknown Antarctic, high in mountainous Tibet, far beneath the surface of the sea; I dreamed that I moved among great dwellings in wonder and beauty, amidst others of my kind, and among aliens as friends, aliens whose very aspect might, in waking hours, have congealed the blood in my veins, all here in this nocturnal world given to one cause, the service to those great ones whose minions we were; dreamed through the night of other worlds, other realms of being; of new sensations and incredible, tentacled beings commanding our obedience and worship; dreamed so that I woke next morning exhausted and yet exhilarated, as if in the night I had actually experienced my dreams and yet remained charged with unimaginable strength for greater ordeals to come.

But I was on the threshold of a greater discovery.

Late the next afternoon, I donned my swimming trunks, affixed a pair of flippers to my feet, put on the helmet and oxygen tanks, and descended to the water's edge below the house. Even now I find it difficult to write of what befell me without wonder and incredulity. I lowered myself cautiously into that water, feeling for bottom, and, finding it, walked outwards towards

the sea, at the bottom of a cavern many times the height of a man, walked outwards until suddenly I came to its end, and there, without warning, I stepped off into space, and fell slowly through the water towards the ocean floor, a grey world of rocks and sand and aquatic growth that wove and writhed eerily in the dim light which penetrated that depth.

Here I was sharply conscious of the water's pressure, and beginning to wonder, too, about the weight of the helmet and oxygen tank when the time came for me to rise again. Perhaps the need of finding some place by means of which to walk out on to the shore would preclude any further search; yet, even as I thought this, I was impelled ever outwards, walking away from the shore and bearing south, out from Innsmouth.

It dawned upon me with horrifying suddenness that I was being drawn as by a magnet, even against my better judgement, for the oxygen in my tanks would not last long, and would need to be replenished before I could hope to return, if I went very far out from the shore line. Yet I was helpless to prevent myself from going seawards; it was as if some power beyond my control were drawing me away from the shore, outwards and down, for the land beneath the sea there sloped gently downwards, in a direction southeast of the house on the rock; in this direction I went steadily now, without pause, even though I was aware of a growing panic—I must turn about, must begin to find my way back. To swim up to the cave would require almost superhuman effort, despite the lightening pressure of the depths to start me on my way; to reach the foot of the stairs in the pit below the house, at a time when my oxygen was surely all but gone, would be almost impossible if I did not turn without delay.

Yet something there would not permit me to turn. I moved ever onwards, outwards, as if by a design imposed upon me by a power greater than my own. I had no alternative. I must go ahead, and all the while my alarm grew, I found myself in violent conflict between what I wished to do and what I must do, and the oxygen in my tanks diminished with every step. Several times I vaulted upwards, swimming vigorously; but, while there was no difficulty about swimming—indeed, I seemed to swim with almost miraculous ease—always I came back to the ocean floor, or found myself swimming outwards.

Once I paused and looked about me, trying in vain to pierce the ocean's

depths. I thought I imagined a great pale green fish swimming in my wake, and had the illusion that it was a mermaid, for I seemed to see hair streaming from it; but then it was lost again behind the growths of that aquatic deep. But I could not pause for long; I was drawn ever forward, until at last I knew that my oxygen was almost gone, my breathing became more and more laboured, and I struggled to swim to the surface, only to find myself falling from the place to which I had vaulted upwards, falling into a crevice on the ocean's floor.

Then, only a few moments before I lost consciousness, I was aware of the swift approach of my follower, of hands upon my helmet and the oxygen tanks—it was not a fish at all, nor a mermaid: it was the naked body of Ada Marsh I had seen, with her long hair streaming out behind her, swimming with the ease and facility of a natural denizen of the deep!

4

WHAT FOLLOWED upon this almost dream-like vision was most incredible of all. I felt in my declining consciousness, rather than saw, that Ada took the helmet and oxygen tanks from me and dropped them into the depths below, and then, slowly, awareness returned; I found myself swimming, with Ada guiding me with her strong, capable fingers, not back, not up, but still outwards. And I found myself swimming as ably as she, and, like herself, opening and closing my mouth as were I breathing through the water—*and so I was!* What ancestral gift I had unwittingly possessed now opened up before me all the vast wonders of the sea—I could breathe without surfacing, an amphibian born!

Ada flashed ahead of me, and I followed. I was swift, but she was swifter. No more the slow walk across the ocean's floor, now only the propulsion of arms and legs that were seemingly made for the water, and the surging, triumphant joy of swimming so, without constraint, towards some goal I knew dimly I was meant to reach. Ada led the way, and I followed, while above us, beyond the water, the sun sank westwards, and the day ended, the last light withdrew down the west, and the sickle moon shone in the afterglow.

And at this hour we drove upwards towards the surface, following a line

of jagged rock which marked the wall of shore or island, I could not tell which, and broke water far from the shore at a place where a shelf of land jutted out of the sea, from which it was possible to see to the west the twinkling lights of a town, a harbour city, seeing which, and looking back to where Ada Marsh and I sat in the moonlight, with boats moving shadowily between us and the shore, and between us and the line of the horizon to the east, I knew where we were—on that same Devil Reef off Innsmouth, the place where once before, prior to that catastrophic night in 1928, our ancestors had played and disported themselves among their brethren from the ocean's deeps.

"How could you have failed to know?" asked Ada patiently. "You might have died with all that to suffocate you. If I had not come to the house when I did . . ."

"I had no way of knowing," I said.

"How else did you think your uncle went exploring, but like this?"

My Uncle Sylvan's quest was hers, too, and now it was mine. To look for the seal of R'lyeh, and beyond, to discover the sleeper in the depths, the dreamer whose call I had felt and answered—Great Cthulhu. It was not off Innsmouth, of that Ada was confident. And to prove it, she led the way down into the depths once more, far down off Devil Reef and showed me the great megalithic stone structures lying in ruin there as a result of the depth-bombing of 1928, the place where many years before the early Marshes and Phillipses had continued their contact with the Deep Ones, down to swim among the ruins of that once great city, where I saw the first of them and was filled with horror at the sight—the frog-like caricature of a human being, that swam with greatly exaggerated movements so similar to those of a frog, and watched us with bulging eyes and batrachian mouth, boldly, not fearful, recognizing us as his brethren from outside, down through the monoliths to the ocean floor once more. The destruction there was very great. Even so had other places been destroyed by little bands of wilful men dedicated to preventing the return of Great Cthulhu.

And so up again, and back to the house on the rock, where Ada had left her clothes, and to make that compact which bound us each to each, and to plan for the journey to Ponape and the further search.

Within two weeks we were off to Ponape in a chartered craft, off on

that mission of which we dared breathe no word to the ship's crew, for fear they would think us mad and desert. We were confident that our quest would be successful, that somewhere in the uncharted islands of the Polynesias we would find that which we sought, and, finding it, go to join forever our brethren of the seas who serve and wait upon the day of the resurrection, when Cthulhu and Hastur and Lloigor and Yog-Sothoth shall rise again and vanquish the Elder Gods in that titanic struggle which must come.

We made Ponape our headquarters. Sometimes we set out from there; sometimes we used the craft we had chartered oblivious of the curiosity of the crew. We searched the waters; sometimes we were gone for days. And soon my metamorphosis was complete. I dare not tell how we sustained ourselves in those journeys under the sea, of what manner of food we ate. Once there was a crash of a great airliner . . . but of this, no more. Suffice it to say that we survived, and I found myself doing things I would have thought bestial only a year ago, that nothing but the urgency of our quest impelled us on, and nothing other concerned us—only our survival, and the goal we held ever before our eyes.

How shall I write of what we saw and still retain even a shred of confidence and trust? The great cities of the ocean floor, and the greatest of them all, the most ancient, off the coast from Ponape, where the Deep Ones abounded, and we could move for days among the towers and the great slabs of stone, down among the minarets and domes of that sunken city, almost lost among the aquatic forest-growth of the bottom of the sea, seeing how the Deep Ones lived, befriending and befriended by a curious marine life which was octopoid in general appearance, and yet was not octopoid, fighting sharks and other enemies, even as we were forced to do from time to time, living only to serve him whose call can be heard in the depths, though none knows where he lies dreaming against the time of his coming again.

How shall I write of our ceaseless search, from city to city, from building to building, looking always for the great seal, beneath which He may lie, save as an endless round of days and nights, sustained by hope and the driving urgency of the goal which loomed always ahead, a little closer every day? It seldom varied, and yet was always different. None could tell what each new day would bring. True, our chartered craft was not always a boon, for we were required to leave it by boat, and in turn, once our boat could be con-

cealed along some island shore, to go into the depths surreptitiously, which displeased us. Even so, the crew grew daily more inquisitive, confident that we sought hidden treasure, and likely to demand a share, so that it was difficult avoiding their questions and their ever-increasing suspicions.

We sought thus for three months, and then, two days ago, we put down anchor off a strange, uninhabited island far from any major settlement. Nothing grew upon it, and it had the appearance of blasted area. Indeed, it seemed to be but an upthrusting of basaltic rock, which at one time must have loomed high above the water, but which had been bombarded severely, possibly during the past war. Here we left our craft, went round the island, and descended into the sea. There, too, was a city of the Deep Ones, and it, too, had been blasted and ruined by enemy action.

But, though the city below the black island was in ruins, it was not deserted, and it stretched away on all sides into untouched areas. And there, in one of the oldest of the huge monolithic buildings, we found that which we sought—in the centre of a vast room, many storeys in height, lay a great stone slab which was the source of that likeness I had first seen and failed to recognize in the decorations of my uncle's house—the Seal of R'lyeh! And, standing upon it, we could hear from beneath it, movement as of some vast amorphous body, restless as the sea, stirring in dream—and we knew we had come to the goal we sought, and could now enter upon an eternity of service to Him Who Will Rise Again, the dweller in the deep, the sleeper in the depths, whose dreams encompass not only earth but the dominion of all the universes, and who shall need such as Ada Marsh and I to minister to his wants until the time of his second coming.

We are still here as I write, and I set this down should we fail to return to our craft. The hour is late, and tomorrow we shall descend again, to find some way, if possible, to open the seal. Was it indeed imposed upon Great Cthulhu by the Elder Gods in banishing him? And dare we then to pry it up, to go below, into the presence of Him Who Lies Dreaming there? Ada and I—and soon there will be another of us, born in his natural element, to wait and serve Great Cthulhu. For we have heard the call, we have obeyed, and we are not alone. There are others who come from every corner of the earth, spawn too of that mating between men and the women of the sea, and soon the seas will belong to us, and thereafter all earth, and beyond . . . and we shall live in power and glory forever.

* * *

Extract from the Singapore *Times,* November 7, 1947.

The crew of the ship *Rogers Clark* were freed today after being held in connection with the strange disappearance of Mr. and Mrs. Marius Phillips, who had chartered the vessel to conduct some kind of research among the Polynesias. Mr. and Mrs. Phillips were last seen in the vicinity of an uninhabited island approximately South Latitude 47° 53', West Longitude 127° 37'. They had gone out in a small boat and evidently entered the island from the shore opposite their ship. From the island they would seem to have gone into the sea, for the crew testified to witnessing a singularly astonishing upheaval of the water on the far side of the island, and the ship's captain, together with the first mate, who were on the bridge, saw what appeared to be both of his employers tossed aloft in the geyser of water and drawn back down again into the sea. They did not reappear, though the ship stood by for several hours. An examination of the island disclosed that the clothes worn by Mr. and Mrs. Phillips were in their small boat. A manuscript in Mr. Phillips' hand, purporting to be fact, but obviously fiction, was found in his cabin, and turned in to the Singapore police by Captain Morton. No trace of Mr. and Mrs. Phillips has been found . . .

THE TRAIL OF CTHULHU

THE HOUSE ON CURWEN STREET

THE WATCHER FROM THE SKY

THE GORGE BEYOND SALAPUNCO

THE KEEPER OF THE KEY

THE BLACK ISLAND



BEING THE MANUSCRIPT OF ANDREW PHELAN

(The controversial Phelan Manuscript, found in the room from which Andrew Phelan so strangely vanished during the night of September 1, 1938, has at last been conditionally released for publication by the library of Miskatonic University of Arkham, Massachusetts, which had requested it from the Boston police files. It is reproduced here by express permission of Dr. Llanfer of the library staff, with the exception only of certain deletions whose suggestiveness was too terrible, and whose concepts too alien to contemporary mankind to permit of publication.)

1

"Man must be prepared to accept notions of the cosmos, and of his own place in the seething vortex of time, whose merest mention is paralyzing. He must, too, be placed on guard against a specific, lurking peril which, though it will never engulf the whole race, may impose monstrous and unguessable horrors upon certain venturesome members of it."

—H. P. LOVECRAFT

IT WOULD NOT BE IN error to maintain that my recent experiences were a direct outgrowth of the advertisement in the Personals column of *The Saturday Review,* for the advertisement was unusual and provocative. I saw it first on a day when I was not certain from what source my next week's board and lodging were coming; it was unpretentious, but there was in it a curious note of challenge which I found it difficult to ignore. I read down the column and came back to it.

> "Young man of brawn, brain, and limited imagination. If with modicum of secretarial ability, apply to 93 Curwen Street, Arkham, Mass., for information which may be of monetary advantage."

Arkham was only a few hours from Boston—an old city whose clustering gambrel roofs had once concealed hunted witches, whose changelessness lent itself to strange tales of haunts and legends, whose narrow streets along the Miskatonic River were sentient with the very presence of past centuries, of people who had lived there and had been dust for long decades—and it was pleasant to find myself once more within its boundaries early that June evening. I had philosophically packed all such worldly goods as I felt might be necessary to keep me in the position—if I suited the advertiser—until I myself knew that I could fill it to my own satisfaction; and I carried them in one stout suitcase, which I checked at the bus station immediately on my arrival there. After a light repast, I sought out a city directory and ascertained the identity of the inhabitant of 93 Curwen Street, whose name was given as Dr. Laban Shrewsbury.

Acting on the intuitive conviction that Dr. Shrewsbury might be a person of some consequence, I took myself to the reference rooms of Miskatonic University and made inquiry, as a result of which I was directed not only to a local file on him, but also to a book he had written and published two years ago. The file was informative to an exceptional degree; I learned that Dr. Shrewsbury was a student of mysticism, a lecturer in occult sciences, a teacher of philosophy, an authority on myth and religious patterns of ancient peoples. His book, I am ashamed to confess, was far less informative; it was in large part beyond me. It bore the forbidding title of *An Investigation into the Myth-Patterns of Latter-day Primitives with Especial Reference to the R'lyeh Text,* and the merely cursory glances which I was able to give it con-

veyed nothing whatever to me, save the fact that my prospective employer was engaged upon some kind of research which ought, if not precisely within my sphere, to be at least not uncongenial to me. Armed with this information, I set out for Curwen Street.

The house I sought differed little from other houses on its street; indeed, it had so similar an aspect that it might have been one of a row all designed by the same unimaginative architect and constructed by the same builders. It was large without giving the appearance of largeness; its windows were casement windows, and small; its many gables receded into roofs that seemed to sway and sag; and it was weather-stained without having the appearance of being in sore need of paint. Moreover, it was set between gnarled trees, both of an indeterminate age, but seemingly quite ancient, older in fact than the house, which had about it an aura of age that was almost tangible. At this time of the day—the hour was that last hour of dusk, when the deeper twilight invades country lanes and city streets like a kind of just perceptible smoke—the house had an almost sinister appearance, but this I knew to be the inevitable effect of the ever-changing light.

There was no glow from any of the windows, and I stood briefly on the stoop wondering whether I might have chosen an inopportune time to call on my prospective employer. But I had not, for even as I raised my hand to knock, the door swung open, and I found myself facing an elderly man who wore his hair long and white, but had neither moustache nor beard, thus revealing a firm, almost prognathous chin, half-pursed lips, and a strong Roman nose. His eyes were not visible at all, for he wore dark glasses with shields which prevented one from seeing his eyes even from the side.

"Dr. Shrewsbury?"

"Yes. What can I do for you?"

"My name is Andrew Phelan. I came in answer to your advertisement in *The Saturday Review.*"

"Ah. Come in. You're just in time."

I did not attach any significance to this cryptic statement, other than to assume that he had been expecting someone else—as indeed he had, for so he soon informed me—and wished only to say that I came in good time for an interview, before his expected visitor turned up. I followed him into a dimly-lit hall, so feebly illumined that I had to go cautiously lest I stumble, and presently found myself in the old man's study, a high-ceilinged room

which contained many books, not only on shelves, but strewn all over on floor, chairs, and the old man's desk. The professor waved me to a chair and himself sat down at his desk. He began immediately to ply me with questions.

Could I read Latin and French? Yes, I could read both languages with some facility. Could I box and did I know jiu-jitsu? Happily, I had some knowledge of both. He seemed particularly concerned about my imagination, and repeatedly asked curious questions which seemed designed to reveal to him whether I could be easily frightened, never once asking me directly. He explained that he had occasion to pursue his studies in strange, out-of-the-way places, and was often put in some personal danger from roughs and thugs, and for that purpose he required a secretary-companion who would act as a bodyguard should the necessity—admittedly remote—arise. Could I transcribe conversation? I believed I could do so reasonably well. He hoped I was familiar with certain dialects, and seemed gratified when I revealed that I had studied philology at Harvard.

"You may wonder," he said then, "at my insistence about lack of imagination, but my researches and experiments are of so outré a character that a too-imaginative companion might well be able to grasp enough of the fundamentals to suspect the cosmic revelations which might come of my work. Candidly, I must take precautions to prevent anything of that nature from happening."

I had been aware for some time of something vaguely disquieting about Dr. Shrewsbury; I could not ascertain what it was, nor what basis it had in my awareness. Perhaps it was that I could obtain no glimpse of his eyes; certainly it was disconcerting to be faced by those opaque black glasses which gave no hint of sight; but it did not seem to be that; it seemed rather to be something that was almost psychic and, had I been given to an easy submission to intuition, I would have withdrawn. For there was something markedly strange here; I needed no imagination to sense it; there was an aura of fear and awe about the room in which I sat, oddly incongruous with the musty smell of books and old papers, and there was above all an insistent and absurd impression of being in a place apart and away from all other human habitation, like a house of dread in a remote forest, or a place of insecurity in a borderland between darkness and daylight instead of a prosaic old dwelling along one of the river streets in ancient Arkham.

Quite as if he sensed this incipient doubt lodged in my mind, my prospective employer delivered himself of some reassurance in the disarming way in which he spoke of his work, seeming to ally us against the predatorily curious world which inevitably imposes upon scholars and savants, and casts over all their work and thought the insidious rust of doubt and disparagement. It was because of this, he said, that he preferred to work with someone like myself, who came to him free of any prejudice and would shortly be protected against prejudice.

"Many of us search in strange places for strange things," he said, "and there are aspects of existence about which even the great of our time have not yet dared to speculate. Einstein and Schrödinger have come close among the scientists; the late writer Lovecraft came even closer." He shrugged. "But now, to business."

Forthwith he made me an offer of remuneration so tempting that it would have been folly even to hesitate about its acceptance; and I did not. At once upon my acceptance, he gravely cautioned me to speak to no one of anything that might actually happen or seem to happen in this house—"For things are not always as they seem," he explained enigmatically—and to know no fear within myself, even if no explanation of events was immediately forthcoming. He would expect me to occupy a room in the house; moreover, he would greatly like to have me begin work at once, as soon as my bag had been got from its place of storage—and this would be sent for—because he wished as much as possible of the conversation with his expected visitor transcribed. The transcription must be made from the adjoining room, or from another place of concealment, since it was doubtful if his visitor would speak if he suspected the presence of anyone other than his host, who had had the greatest difficulty in persuading him to come up from the port of Innsmouth and pay him this visit.

Giving me no opportunity to ask questions, but placing at my disposal pencils and paper, and showing me where I must conceal myself—behind an ingeniously contrived peephole at one of the book-cases—the professor took me upstairs to a small, cramped gable room which was to be mine for the duration of my association with him. It was flattering, I vaguely felt, to have been graduated from a mere secretary-companion to an associate, but I had little time in which to ponder this, for I had hardly returned to the floor below when the professor observed that his visitor must be near.

Hardly had he spoken, when the heavy door resounded to the thud of the knocker and the professor, motioning me to my place of concealment, went to open it and admit his nocturnal visitor.

When my employer first mentioned his coming visitor, I had naturally assumed that it would be someone engaged in similar research; therefore I was utterly unprepared for the sight of the professor's guest that I had from my peephole; for he was by no means the kind of individual I would have expected to see in Dr. Shrewsbury's house. He was still a man on the sunny side of middle age, but this fact was not immediately apparent, for he was swarthy of skin, so swarthy, indeed, that I took him for a lascar, and it was not until he began to speak that I identified him as of South American origin. He was clearly a sailor, for his garb was nautical, and it was obvious that this was not his first visit with the professor, though equally clear that it was his first call at the house on Curwen Street.

There was a colloquy in tones too low for my hearing, but this was evidently not meant for me, since it was not until the two of them were seated in the professor's study that Dr. Shrewsbury raised his voice to normal volume, and his visitor did likewise. The conversation I then transcribed was as follows:

> "I wish you would tell me from the beginning, Señor Fernandez, what took place last summer."
>
> (Apparently disregarding this suggestion, the sailor broke into his narrative in a curious but not illiterate mixture of Spanish and English at a point where he must have dropped it earlier.) "It was night, very black. I was separated from the party, and all the time I walk, walk, I do not know where . . ."
>
> "You were somewhere in the vicinity of Machu Picchu, according to your map?"
>
> "Sí. But I do not know where, and afterward you know, we could not find the place or even the way I took. But then, it rained. There I was walking in the rain, and then I thought I heard music. It was strange music. It was like Indian music. You know, the old Incas lived there, and they had . . ."
>
> "Yes, yes. I know those things. I know about the Incas. I want to know what you saw, Señor Fernandez."

"I walk all the time, I don't know in what directions or anything, but it seemed to me the music was getting louder, and then one time I thought it was just in front of me, but when I walk that way, I come to a bluff. I could feel it was solid stone. I walk around a little way, feeling along it. Then the lightning flashed, and I saw it was a high hill. Then it happened. I don't know how to say it. Suddenly the hill did not seem to be there, or perhaps I was somewhere else, but I swear I had drunk nothing, I was not delirious, I was not ill. I fell down on something, and I was in a doorway—it was rocks that had the shape of a doorway, and there was black water down there, and Indians half-dressed, you know the way they used to dress in the old days of the Conquistadores, and there was something in that lake. That was where this music was coming from."

"The lake?"

"Sí, Señor. From inside the water and from the outside too. There was music of two kinds. One kind was like opium, it was so sweet and intoxicating; the other was by the Indians—it was wild pipe-music, it was not good to hear."

"Can you describe what you saw in the lake?"

"It was big." (Here he paused, his brow furrowed.) "It was so big I do not know how to say it. It seemed to be as big as a hill, but of course, that cannot be. It was like jelly. All the time it changed its shape. Sometimes it was tall. Sometimes it was squat and fat with tentacles. It made a kind of whistling or gurgling sound. I do not know what the Indians were doing with it."

"Were they worshipping it?"

"Sí, sí. That could be it." (He seemed excited.) "But I do not know what it was."

"Have you ever gone back there?"

"No. I thought I was followed that time. Sometimes I think so still. We looked next day. Somehow I found my way back to the camp in the night, but we could find nothing."

"When you say you thought you were followed, do you know by what?"

"It was by one of the Indians." (He shook his head thoughtfully.) "It was like a shadow. I don't know. Maybe not."

"When you saw those Indians, did you hear anything?"

"Sí, but I could not understand. It was not in any language I knew, only in part their own language. But there was one word, perhaps a name. . . ."

"Yes? Go on, please."

"Shooloo."

"Cthulhu!"

"Sí, sí." (He nodded vigorously.) "But for the rest—it was just shouting and screaming, I do not know what it was they said."

"And the thing you saw in the lake—do you know the amorphous horror god of the ocean depths, Kon, Lord of the Earthquake, of the pre-Inca people?"

"Sí."

"Was the thing in the lake in the semblance of Kon?"

"I do not think so. But Kon had many faces, and what I saw came out of the water."

"Was it like the Devourer, the War-God of the Quichua? I take it you have seen the Chavin Stone?"

"Our party examined it many times before we went into the Inca country. It is in the National Museum at Lima. We went from there to Abancay and into the Andes for Cuzco, then into the Cordillera de Vilcanota to Ollantaytambo. Then to Machu Picchu."

"If you examined it, you must have noticed that the diorite slab depicts serpents issuing from various parts of the Devourer's body. Now in regard to the jelly-like mass you saw in the subterranean lake, did it not also have appendages on its body?"

"Not serpents, Señor. It is only seldom that Viracocha is so shown. But, like the thing in the lake, he represents the sea also, as did Kon. Many people say that Viracocha means 'White Foam of the Waters.'"

"But it had appendages? That's the point I wish to make."

"Sí!"

"Were you in the vicinity of the fortress of Salapunco when this happened to you?"

"We had gone beyond it. You know how the land is there. The

fortress is on the right bank of the river. It is very large, but it is differently constructed from most, since it is built of large trapezoid granite blocks of graded size and a shape that is uniform, all evenly placed and fitted, without use of mortar. The rampart is almost fifteen feet high, and faces the river. It is below this place, in the terrible and deep gorges of the granite mountains, where lived the Quichua-Ayars who built the strange deserted city of Machu Picchu, which stands on the summit of a rocky promontory in a loop of the river. Almost on all sides of it is the deep canyon. We were then approaching this place when we made the camp that night. Two of us did not want to go, one wished to go to Sacsahuaman instead. But most of us had set out for Machu Picchu."

"About how far in miles were you from Salapunco?"

"Perhaps a mile, two miles. We were in the low country, and the place was very rocky, though trees and bushes grew thick there."

At this point in the conversation, an extremely curious incident took place which terminated it. Dr. Shrewsbury, his lips half-opened to ask a further question, was suddenly made aware of something beyond my own consciousness; his head gave an imperceptible jerk, as if he had heard something; his lips firmed shut; he got up and said with pressing urgency to his guest that he must leave with the utmost secrecy, and he must take elaborate care not to be seen on his return to Innsmouth; and, so saying, he conducted him posthaste to the rear entrance. Hardly had the door closed behind the sailor, before Dr. Shrewsbury was back.

"Mr. Phelan, in a few moments a gentleman will call and ask for Fernandez. When the knocker sounds, answer the knock; tell him you have not seen Fernandez, you do not know who he is, you know no one of that name."

I had no time to take issue with such orders; in any case, it was not my place to do so; I yielded to Dr. Shrewsbury's outstretched hand and placed my transcription in it even as the knocker's sound echoed through the house. My employer nodded curtly; I went to the door and opened it.

Never have I felt such extreme and immediate revulsion as I did at the sight of the man on the stoop. There was, admittedly, no streetlight for some distance, and the light which flowed from the hall was so dim as to be more

confusing than helpful, but I am prepared to swear that not only was there a grotesquely batrachian aspect about the fellow's face—irrationally and yet perhaps not inappropriately, there flashed into mind at once the oddly fascinating depiction by Tenniel of the frog footman of the Duchess in *Alice in Wonderland*—but that his fingers, where one hand rested upon the iron rail of the stoop, were *webbed*. Moreover, he exuded an almost overpowering odor of the sea—not that smell so commonly associated with coastal areas, but of watery depths. One might have thought that from his oddly wide mouth there would issue sounds as repulsive as his aspect, but on the contrary, he spoke in flawless English, and inquired with almost exaggerated politeness whether a friend of his, one Señor Timoto Fernandez, had called here.

"I have no acquaintance with Señor Fernandez," I answered.

He stood there for a moment, giving me a contemplative stare which, had I been prey to imaginative fear, would most certainly have chilled me; then he nodded, thanked me, bade me good night, and turned to walk away into the foggy darkness.

I returned to the professor's study. Without looking up from the transcription he held in his hands, Dr. Shrewsbury asked me to describe our inquiring caller. I did so, omitting no detail of his attire as I had seen it in the uncertain light, and not forgetting to mention also my curious revulsion at sight of him.

He nodded, smiling grimly. "They are everywhere, those creatures," he said cryptically. But he offered no explanation of this singular incident. Instead, he went on to suggest a reason for his interest in the account of the sailor Fernandez.

No doubt it occasioned some question in my mind, he said, in regard to his patient delving, but it had long ago seemed apparent that there might well be a connection between certain forms of worship in the great plateaus of unknown central Asia, notably that of Leng, a hidden and secret place, and that of older and more primitive cultures on other continents—some of which doubtless survived in various forms to this day.

"Kimmich, for instance, asks where the Chimu civilization of Khmer came from if not remote places within what is now China? And the Dravidians who were driven out of parts of India by Aryans and went to Malaysia and Polynesia, later to mix with these same whites, and move eastward as far as Easter Island and Peru, must have brought with them certain strange rites

and worship patterns. In short, it has come to me increasingly that there is a fundamental relationship among many ancient cultures and religious beliefs of which we have only a fragmentary knowledge; at the moment, my concern is the possible dual role of the war-god of the Quichua-Ayars, the Devourer, and the survival of a monstrous, pre-human time, the water-being, Cthulhu, worship of whom seems to have forbidding roots even into the present, so strongly embedded, indeed, among certain sects little known to man, that there is a profoundly intense and consciously malignant determination to keep from the rest of the world any knowledge which might lead to exposure before the time which these devotees of strange cults consider propitious for the coming again of Cthulhu."

He talked in this vein for some time, and most of what he said was beyond me, as perhaps he suspected it might be, though he did not elaborate. However, it was patent to me that his concern for the sailor Fernandez was occasioned by his knowledge of the habits of the cultists, of whom presumably—though Dr. Shrewsbury did not say so—our second caller had been one. Nevertheless, for all his vagueness and the generalities of his monologue, I could not help being conscious of a concept that embodied not only a paralyzing vastness, since the worship of pre-human eras was involved, but also a numbing fright in the incredible horrors and demonic myth-patterns it suggested. That the professor feared for the life of the sailor Fernandez seemed obvious, though he never said as much directly; yet he told of the London scholar, Follexon, who was drowned inexplicably in the Thames off Limehouse, shortly after he had announced himself as on the trail of important disclosures relative to certain ancient survivals in the East Indies; of the presumably accidental death of the archaeologist, Sir Cheever Vordennes, after the discovery of certain black monoliths in Western Australia; of the curious illness which removed from the terrestrial scene—after the publication of tales purporting to be fiction, and revealing progressively more and more about the Cthulhu-Nyarlathotep-Great Old Ones cults, particularly the hellishly revelatory novel, *At the Mountains of Madness,* hinting at strange terrible survivals in the arctic wastes—that great modern master of the macabre, H. P. Lovecraft.

But there was one aspect of that singular evening about which Dr. Shrewsbury said nothing, ignoring it as if it did not exist; nor did I myself think of it until after I had made three copies of the transcribed conversa-

tion at the professor's direction, and had retired to my room, when it came to me while I lay turning over in my mind the strange events into which I had so blindly plunged. I had had evidence of a certain power possessed by my employer almost at once and had not recognized it; before I had knocked, he had opened the door to me. And again, he had somehow seemed to sense the approach of Fernandez. But even more startling was his curious, inexplicable divination of the approach of the caller who came to inquire about the sailor. How had he become aware of him? Perhaps he had developed a supersensory ability which enabled him to hear sounds such as footsteps beyond the ken of the average mortal. But even so, even if he had heard the footsteps of the oncoming pursuer, *how could he have known his purpose?*

Deeply perplexed, I pondered this puzzle late into the night, only to fall asleep at last with no intimation of its solution, and hazily aware of the incredibly ancient atmosphere of the house in which I had now taken up my abode, an atmosphere that burgeoned with mystery and age, and inescapably, an aura of dread.

2

UNDOUBTEDLY THE FIRST of those strange dreams in the house on Curwen Street was the result of what my employer found in the papers he sent me out to get late in the following day, after I had spent hours with him assimilating material he had previously gathered from all corners of the earth. He had told me that he very seldom left the house; that indeed most of the residents of Arkham were not even aware of his existence, and he said that I would frequently be required to run such little errands for him. Ordinarily he took no paper, save *The New York Times;* the mere affairs of the mundane world, even the shaping of events toward another catastrophical war in Europe, were of no moment to him; but on this day he sought a particular piece of information which he was certain might be found in the pages of the *Innsmouth Courier* or the *Newburyport Correspondent,* if not in the local papers.

But it was from the Innsmouth paper that he finally clipped a brief, pointed little article and handed it to me with instructions to file it together with my transcription of the previous night's conversation. The article,

which was suggestive and frightening in the light of what the professor had hinted in his final monologue the night before, read:

> The body of a sailor who fell to his death from the docks ruined by Federal agents in the winter of 1928 was recovered this noon in the vicinity of Devil Reef. A native reported the accident early this morning, saying that the sailor seemed to be walking in the company of or just ahead of a companion, who had disappeared, however, when the local residents reached the spot. Stories of a struggle in the water and certain references to webbed hands are generally considered the product of a bottle. The sailor was identified as one Timoto Fernandez, late of the *Chan-Chan,* out of Trujillo.

The implications of this casual article were ominous; yet there was no word from the professor. Clearly he had expected something of the kind; his interest in it did not smack of regret, but only of a kind of casual, philosophic acceptance; he added no comment whatever to it, and his entire attitude forbade any inquiry from me. Yet it had an ultimate effect on him, for after an hour's study of the conversation transcript, he found among his papers a detailed map of Peru, and before this he sat for another hour, carefully scrutinizing the Andean country in the region of the ruins of Machu Picchu, Cuzco, the Salapunco fortress, and the Cordillera de Vilcanota, finally marking off a small area between the fortress and the site of Machu Picchu.

Doubtless it was my observation of this singularly intent and soundless study which was in part responsible for the extraordinary dream of that night—the first of that astonishing sequence—for immediately following his examination of the map, my employer betrayed an odd eccentricity and decreed that we should both retire, though the night was still very young; indeed, dusk had hardly given way to darkness, and from outside still came the muted crying of birds subsiding for the night. Moreover, before I slept, I must partake of a venerable old mead which he himself had brewed, a wonderfully golden liquid, which he kept in a carafe in his desk and served in tiny Belgian liqueur glasses in such small amounts that it seemed futile even to raise it to one's lips—and yet its bouquet and its taste were such as to

amply repay any effort made to obtain it, for it outdid even the oldest Chianti and the best Chateau Yquem to such an extent that to mention them in the same breath was to do injustice to the professor's brew. Fiery though it was, it had the additional effect of making me drowsy, with the result that I no longer felt any reluctance to retire to my room and accordingly bade the professor good night and went up the stairs.

I must have thrown myself upon my bed fully dressed for that is how I awakened in the morning. However, between darkness and daylight, the extraordinary vividness of the dream that took possession of me was so compelling that when, much later, I feared for my sanity and consulted a psychiatrist in regard to the succession of dreams which this inaugurated, I was able to relate it in the minutest detail, even if it had not been for those shocking and hideously suggestive discoveries I made later.

The data taken down and summarized by Dr. Asenath DeVoto tells as succinctly as possible the essential substance of the dream, and I cannot do better than to copy it into my narrative just as he took it down.

"Case History.

"Andrew Phelan, ae. 28, of white parents, born in Roxbury, Mass.

"Dream I.

"Professor Shrewsbury came to my room, carrying my transcription pad and several pencils. He woke me, gave me what he carried, and said, 'Come.' Then he stepped to the leaded window opening from my room to the south, opened it, and looked out. The night was very black. He turned to me and said, 'Just wait a minute,' as if we were going somewhere. Then he took from his pocket a curiously shaped whistle, which he blew upon. After he had made its strange ululant sound, he shouted into space. He said, '*Iä! Iä! Hastur! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!*'

"Then he took me by the hand and stepped up to the sill of the tall, narrow window. I followed him, and both of us stepped out into space. I felt something beneath us, and I saw that each of us was riding a monstrous black-winged bat-like creature which travelled with the speed of light. In a very little while we were set down in a country of great mountains. I thought at first it was uninhabited country, but presently it was clear to me that we were in a remote, almost inaccessible region which had been the seat of an ancient civilization, for we were in the vicinity of a building of great granite

blocks, trapezoid in shape, with monolithic columns. This rose behind a high rampart, more than twice as tall as we were. But it was not here we were apparently destined to go, for Dr. Shrewsbury turned and led the way down an old road, past many long-abandoned structures which appeared to be portions of pre-legendary megalithic buildings, deeper and deeper into the gorges and passes of the valleys lying among the mountains, ultimately leaving the road, and exploring clefts and passages in the rocky cliffs and promontories that jutted forth.

"We seemed to progress with great speed, and it did not seem that either time or space could hinder us. Indeed, there was no time. I was not aware of time passing or of any other physical need. Though it was night, and the stars were in their places: the Southern Cross, great Canopus, and others I recognized; Dr. Shrewsbury seemed to know where he was going, for presently he arrived at the place he sought, and I saw him press his hands and fingers upon a great stone wall, walking along in a place only a little above a torrential river which flowed past beneath, in the depths of the gorge.

"Suddenly a portion of the stone wall tipped open, and we entered. The place into which we walked was a short, narrow passageway, sloping sharply down. Dr. Shrewsbury led the way and I followed; we seemed to float along. The corridor presently opened upon a vast subterranean cavern, filled with a kind of green light, subaqueous and unnatural, which seemed to emanate from a body of water not far away. It was the place described by the sailor Fernandez. Dr. Shrewsbury went directly to the water's edge, touched it with a finger, and tasted it, seeing which, I was impelled to do likewise, despite the greenish-black muck of the earth at the water's edge—though there was little soil there, only a thin siltish covering over rock. The water was salty.

" 'As I thought,' said Dr. Shrewsbury. 'The lake has subterranean canals leading to the Pacific, and such passages would be certain to give into the Humboldt Currents.' He ordered me to transcribe this fact, and I did so, adding at his direction a detailed description of the cavern, or as much of it as I could see in the pallid light. 'This is the second occurrence of the Humboldt Currents in such a connection, and it is therefore not too much to suppose that at some point in their course the Currents touch upon sunken R'lyeh,' he went on, talking to himself, yet indicating that I was to put down everything he conjectured.

"While I was thus engaged, a native of Indian stock appeared. Seeing him emerge from the farther wall, Dr. Shrewsbury immediately advanced upon him and spoke to him in Spanish, to which the Indian shook his head, and threatened my employer with a small club he carried. But the professor took from another pocket a strange five-pointed star-shaped stone, and held this up before the Indian. This conveyed something to him which made him less suspicious of us, and more amenable. The professor then spoke in another language which I could not understand, and finally in a third, which had a horrible sound akin to the sounds the professor had made before stepping out into space from the windowsill. As he spoke this language, which the Indian understood and evidently respected, my employer translated, and I took down questions and answers in our own language.

"'Where is the door to Cthulhu?'

"The Indian pointed at the lake. 'There is the door, but it is not the time.'

"'This is but one of many doors,' the professor went on. 'Do you know another?'

"'No. This is the one. This is his portal.'

"'How many are there of us in this place?'

"By thus misrepresenting ourselves as fellow-cultists, the professor induced the Indian to reveal that there were less than two hundred of the worshippers of Cthulhu in the Cordillera de Vilcanota.

"At this moment a faint disturbance in the water of the subterranean lake became noticeable, and instantly the professor's demeanor underwent a significant change. He stood for a moment watching the trembling and shuddering of the water and waited until it began to boil up and churn before he turned once more to the Indian and asked rapidly when the time of the next meeting would be.

"'Tomorrow night. You are a day too soon.'

"Then Dr. Shrewsbury led the way out of the cavern, turning at the threshold to look back. I did likewise. I saw a horrible thing. I cannot describe it. It was a vast protoplasmic mass, which underwent many mutations while it rose out of the water in all its monstrous horror. From it seemed to come a combination of strange unearthly music and a shrill urgent whistling. Then the professor tugged at my sleeve and we went outside of the cavern, where at once Dr. Shrewsbury summoned the strange bat-like crea-

tures which had brought us, and we returned as we had come to the house on Curwen Street."

Manifestly it was not strange that I should have dreamed of the oddly suggestive narrative of the sailor Fernandez; but there were certain disquieting features of that dream which upset me, and there was an astonishingly realistic and curiously detailed background for that dream. It would be untrue if I said that it did not trouble me; moreover, there were certain puzzling conditions under which it had taken place. For one thing, the intoxicating and soporific effect of Dr. Shrewsbury's mead, causing me to go to sleep immediately; for another, the absolute lack of memory of whether or not I had removed my shoes before throwing myself on the bed—for in the morning, when I woke to bright sunlight streaming into the room, my shoes were gone, and I was forced to wear my bedroom slippers. The professor explained that he had sent my shoes out to be cleaned, and, while I laid this to his eccentricity, yet it seemed exceedingly strange to me that he should have taken the trouble to remove them while I slept.

For the first half of that day he discoursed upon the languages of those obscure evil cults, the pre-human languages of Naacal, Aklo, and Tsatho-yo, and from the dread *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred, Dr. Shrewsbury quoted the translation of a couplet which, in the light of subsequent events, assumed a terrible significance.

> That is not dead which can eternal lie,
> And with strange eons even death may die.

But it was in the R'lyehian language that he was most interested. There were certain hints in the less obscure passages of the *Necronomicon* as well as in the shuddersome *R'lyeh Text* which seemed to indicate that the awaited time for the resurgence of Cthulhu was growing near; and there were, moreover, certain disturbing anagramatic cross-references in the later oblique Latin prophecies of Nostradamus which told of catastrophic events to come; and there was the additional incidence of evidence in notes the professor had earlier taken and which I had to transcribe, which indicated that there had been within the past decade a startling and ominous revival of ancient cults all over the world.

More than ever I was aware of the undeniable fact that however frank and engaging my employer seemed to be in his discussion of his interests, he took great pains, even without seeming to do so, to prevent me from learning too much. In short, no matter what he said, he spoke either in terms so vague as to be virtually meaningless without the proper information or background, or with such lofty and erudite references that it was frankly impossible to patch together anything even remotely resembling a coherent narrative. At the end of that day I knew no more than I had known after my first conversation with the professor—that he was on the track of certain blasphemous cults of ancient, pre-human eras, whose survival to the present day in out-of-the-way places seemed to fascinate him; the references he made to colossal beings, the Great Old Ones, quotations from such books as the Comte d'Erlette's *Cultes des Goules,* the Pnakotic Manuscripts, the *Libor Ivonie,* and the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* of Von Junzt, oblique mention of such beings as Nyarlathotep, Hastur, Lloigor, Cthugha, Azathoth, which, in addition to Cthulhu, had their own bodies of worshippers—all these were impossible of any coherence. Nor was it possible for me to make anything out of the quotations from the ancient books which the professor put me to transcribing in triplicate, though they were filled with the most outré and terrifying implications, and some among them were fixed in my memory even as I became aware of what it was I put down:

> Ubbo-Sathla is the source, the unbegotten beginning from whom came those who dared set themselves against the Elder Gods who ruled from Betelgeuse, those who warred upon the Elder Gods, the Great Old Ones led by the blind idiot god, Azathoth, and Yog-Sothoth, who is All-in-One and One-in-All, and upon whom are no strictures of time or space, and whose agents are 'Umr At-Tawil and the Ancient Ones, who dream forever of that time when once again they shall rule, to whom rightfully belong Earth and the entire universe of which it is a part. . . . Great Cthulhu shall rise from R'lyeh, Hastur the Unspeakable shall return from the dark star which is in the Hyades near Aldebaran, the red eye of the bull, Nyarlathotep shall howl forever in the darkness where he abideth, Shub-Niggurath shall spawn his thousand young, and they shall spawn in turn and shall take dominion

> over all wood nymphs, satyrs, leprechauns, and the Little People, Lloigor, Zhar, and Ithaqua shall ride the spaces among the stars, and those who serve them, the Tcho-Tcho, shall be ennobled, Cthugha shall encompass his dominion from Fomalhaut, and Tsathoggua shall come from N'kai. . . . They wait by the gates, for the time draws near, the hour is soon at hand, and the Elder Gods sleep, dreaming, and there are those who know the spells put upon the Great Old Ones by the Elder Gods, as there are those who shall learn how to break them, as already they know how to command the servants of those who wait beyond the door from Outside.

In the course of that day, the professor descended to a laboratory on the lowest floor of the building, and busied himself with what appeared to be chemical experiments, leaving me to my own devices upstairs, though in midafternoon he came up, carrying my shoes, now cleaned and polished, and instructed me to go to the library of Miskatonic University and transcribe page 177 of the *Necronomicon*.

I was glad to leave the house even for what promised to be so brief a task, and I took my departure at once. The indicated page was in the Latin of Olaus Wormius, and was equally as meaningless as earlier references, though, truth to tell, there were now beginning to form in my mind certain dark suspicions which I did not dare face fully, preferring rather to remain completely objective in my approach, as Dr. Shrewsbury had suggested would be the best course for me to follow. The page in question was not long, and it was apparently being copied because of some doubt held by my employer about his own previous copy, which I had had opportunity to see earlier that day.

> For within the five-pointed star carven of grey stone from ancient Mnar lies armor against witches and daemons, against the Deep Ones, the Dholes, the Voormis, the Tcho-Tcho, the Abominable Mi-Go, the Shoggoths, the Valusians, and all such peoples and beings who serve the Great Old Ones and their Spawn, but it is less potent against the Great Old Ones themselves. He who hath the five-pointed stone shall find himself able to command all be-

ings who creep, swim, crawl, walk, or fly even to the source from which there is no returning.

In the land of Yhe as in great R'lyeh, in Y'ha-nthlei as in Yoth, in Yuggoth as in Zothique, in N'kai as in K'n-yan, in Kadath in the Cold Waste, as in the Lake of Hali, in Carcosa as in Ib, it shall have power; but even as the stars wane and grow cold, as the suns die, and the spaces between the stars grow more great, so wanes the power of all things—of the five-pointed star-stone as of the spells put upon the Great Old Ones by the benign Elder Gods, and there shall come a time as once there was a time, and it shall be shown that

> That is not dead which can eternal lie,
> And with strange eons even death may die.

While I was engaged in copying this page, I observed that I was being kept under eye by an aged attendant, who contrived to move ever closer to me. Since the *Necronomicon* was so rare a book—but five copies were known to be in existence—I naturally assumed that the old gentleman was intent upon seeing that no harm came to it, but presently it occurred to me that his interest was rather in me than in the book, and, having finished, I leaned back and afforded him an opportunity to speak to me if he desired to do so.

He took the opportunity with alacrity, and introduced himself as an old resident of Arkham. Was I not the young man who worked for Professor Shrewsbury? I admitted that I was. His eyes shone extraordinarily, and his fingers began to tremble. Clearly, he said, I was not a native, for there were curious stories about the professor.

"Where was he those twenty years?" asked Mr. Peabody. "Did he ever say to you?"

I was mystified. "What twenty years?"

"Ah, you don't even know, eh? Well, I don't wonder he won't say anything. But he was gone, slick and clean as a whistle, just vanished into the wind, you might say, for twenty years. Three years ago he came back, didn't look a day older, and just went on as if nothing had happened. 'Travelling,' he says he was. But it looks mighty queer that a man could disappear from the middle of the street, you might say, and be gone for twenty years, never

draw a penny of his money from the bank, and then come back and take up just where he left off as if nothing at all had taken place, not a day older, not a whit different—no sir, that's not natural. If he was travelling, what did he use for money? I worked in the bank that time, I know."

This came out in such a spate of words that it took me a few moments to assimilate it. It was not strange that Professor Shrewsbury should be the object of almost superstitious suspicion among the natives; ancient Arkham with its gambrel roofs and forbidding dormers, with its legends of witches and exorcised devils, was indeed a likely and fertile ground for the growth of doubt and distrust, particularly when such reactions concerned someone who was so manifestly versed in fabled lore as Dr. Shrewsbury.

"He has never mentioned it to me," I said with as much dignity as I could muster.

"No, and he won't. And don't you mention this to him, either. It might be as much as my job's worth, though I don't know that he ever did anything to anybody—just always living so much alone and keeping to himself, like he does."

I did not think it fitting to discuss my employer in this fashion; so politely but firmly I pointed out that there were doubtless entirely logical explanations for what had taken place, ignored his quick retort: "They've all been gone into and not a one fits!" and took my departure. However, I did not immediately leave the building. Impelled by curiosity stimulated by Mr. Peabody's inquiry, I sought the newspaper files of both the Arkham papers, the *Gazette* and the *Advertiser*.

I had no difficulty confirming Mr. Peabody's curious story; Professor Shrewsbury had literally disappeared from a country lane west of Arkham, where he had been seen walking but a few moments before one evening in September, twenty-three years ago. No clue had ever been discovered, not in the lane or in his house; his house had been shut up, pending the appearance of a claimant, and, since none had ever come forward, and the property taxes had been duly paid by Dr. Shrewsbury's legal advisers, it had remained in this state until suddenly one day three years ago, Dr. Shrewsbury walked out of it, looking fit as a fiddle, as close-mouthed as a clam about his whereabouts, and resumed his regular way of life, save only that his researches now took a somewhat different line, and his daily existence followed a slightly different pattern. The newspapers had treated the story seriously enough,

but had obviously yielded to Dr. Shrewsbury's insistence to close the incident as quickly and quietly as possible, for there was a cessation of all accounts and speculations which was as sudden as the incident's beginning.

As curiously as this strange occurrence affected me, yet I could not but feel that it was my employer's privilege to maintain such silence as he thought best to keep. I could not, however, deny to myself that the discovery of this curious fact affected me strangely, perhaps not unpleasantly, and yet not entirely agreeably. It was patent that the situation in which I found myself was bewildering to the extreme. Dr. Shrewsbury apparently had more than one kind of reputation, and, though no one had ever taken occasion to say anything derogatory about him to me, I could sense an undercurrent of distrust and suspicion of him.

When I reached the house on Curwen Street I found the professor once again in his study, carefully handling a package which he was arranging on his desk at the moment of my entrance. As I came into the room he extended a careless hand for the transcript, and almost at the same instant gave me a list of materials he needed, instructing me to obtain them on the next occasion I had to go into the shopping district of Arkham. I glanced at the list of materials, and was astonished to discover that all were well-known chemical ingredients for the making of nitroglycerine; this, together with the care with which my employer handled the package on his desk, seemed to indicate an even greater scope of interests than I had at first given the professor credit for.

"Yes, this is what I wanted. I did have it right," mused the professor, reading my transcript carefully, and repeating some parts of it aloud, though the effect of his doing so with the black glasses masking his eyes was oddly unnerving. But in a moment he put it down. "Now, then, I'll go to bed early tonight; if you like, you can work here—you have enough to do; or you may go to bed, too. Or, if you should want to go out . . ."

"No, I've no wish to go out."

"In no circumstances am I to be disturbed until morning."

It was late twilight when we sat down to a frugal meal, and immediately thereafter the professor repaired to his room, taking with him not only the package from his desk, but also the decanter of his golden mead and a glass. I thought it oddly discourteous of him not to offer me another taste of this agreeable liquor, but forebore to say so. But I had little time in which to

think of this; for work beckoned me to the study, and there I spent the first half of the night.

It must have been close to midnight when I was aware of the rising storm outside, and heard the banging of a shutter. I had noticed a cumulus cloud bank louring on the horizon when I returned from the library of Miskatonic University; doubtless it was these clouds which had moved across the face of heaven and were now responsible for both wind and rain. The banging shutter, however, beat insistently on my consciousness, and finally I got up to investigate it. It was in any case time for me to retire.

I made the rounds of the ground floor, but there both windows and shutters were shut or fixed firmly down; it must then be on the second floor, and accordingly I went up the stairs, first to my own room, and then to the others, only to reach the conclusion that the shutter was banging at one of the windows in Professor Shrewsbury's bedroom. I hesitated to go in and fix it, but reflected that my doing so would in all probability prevent its waking him; so I turned the knob of his door silently and entered his room, leaving the door slightly ajar, for I did not want to turn on a light. I found my way to the window, which was standing open, so that the wind could blow the rain into the room; I leaned out, adjusted the shutter, and drew back in, lowering the window somewhat, but not entirely closing it. As I turned, my eyes fell across the bed, and I saw that my employer was not in it; I crossed the room and opened the door wider, mystified; the light from the hall streamed in to reveal that he had apparently only lain down on the bed; he had not undressed. For some reason unknown to me he had gone out, but I had no sooner come to this conclusion before I was uncomfortably aware that I had heard no sound where I worked in the library, and it seemed a manifest impossibility that the old man should have been able to leave the house without somehow attracting my attention.

While I was pondering this, I saw the decanter of mead and the glass Dr. Shrewsbury had taken with him to his room. I crossed over to it and, examining the glass, saw that my employer had drunk of it. Indeed, there was still a drop or so in the slim glass, and impulsively I lifted it to my lips and allowed the fiery liquid to roll over my tongue and down my throat. Then I left the room, resolutely determined to make no inquiry as to Dr. Shrewsbury's whereabouts, since I had no right to pry into matters that did not concern me.

But my curiosity in regard to my employer's strange absence soon gave way before another even stranger occurrence. I have hinted previously that there was about the old house on Curwen Street an aura almost as of dread; I had hardly got into bed, before I was acutely aware of this, even to the extent of imagining inimical hosts pressing upon the building from all sides, but particularly from that side of the house which faced the fog-bound Miskatonic River; moreover, I was only briefly conscious of this peculiar phenomenon, before I was even more sharply aware of something more, something even stranger. This was nothing less than an auditory illusion in that I heard or seemed to hear strange sounds which could not possibly have had an origin anywhere but within my subconscious; for there was no other rational explanation of the noises I now heard on the borderland of sleep. They began with the sound of footsteps—not steps along the walk outside of the house, nor along the floor or even the ground beneath my window, but steps that scraped and stumbled along what must certainly have been a rocky or stony path, for there were occasionally also the additional small noises of stones or rock fragments rolling and falling, and once or twice the distinct impression as of something striking water. How long these sounds lasted, I have no way of knowing; indeed, I grew so accustomed to them, despite their strangeness, that I lay in a condition of semi-sleep until I was brought bolt upright in bed by a thunderous detonation, followed by other explosive sounds, and the terrible urgency of crashing rocks and shale, succeeded by a bitter cry, "Too little! Too little!"

Now there was no possibility of hallucination save that arising from delirium; I was reasonably certain that I was not delirious; in fact, I got out of bed, went to the bathroom and got myself a glass of water. I returned to my bed once more, composed myself again for sleep, and distinctly heard a whistled ululation followed by a chanting voice saying those same mystic words of my first strange dream in the house: "*Iä! Iä! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!*" Then there was a great rushing sound, as of colossal wings, and then silence, complete and absolute, and no further sound impinging upon my consciousness save the normal sounds of the night in Arkham.

To say that I was disturbed is to diminish my reaction to insignificance. I was profoundly troubled, but even in my unnatural drowsiness, I could not help reflecting that on the first occasion of drinking Dr. Shrewsbury's mead,

I had had so strange and vivid a dream; and now, with just a drop or two of it, I had somehow had my sensory perception heightened beyond every natural plane! This "explanation" occurred to me at first with the utmost conviction, but as I contemplated it, I found myself forced to reject it as scientifically unsound. How close I came at that moment to the incredible truth I did not learn for some weeks, for at the time, I was aware only of the one property I knew the mead to possess—that of making me extremely sleepy, and I drowsed off.

In the morning I debated telling the professor of my experience, but ultimately I resolved to say nothing; his insistence on my lack of imagination at our first interview led me to believe that he might go so far as to terminate my employment if he heard such an account from my lips; for the same reason I had told him nothing of my odd dream. Nor did the professor offer any explanation of his unaccountable absence of the previous night. I had been briefly apprehensive lest he still be absent—I knew that the questions he had originally asked me about my ability to defend myself in a physical sense pertained to a possibility that I might have to act as his bodyguard whenever he went out—but he had now returned; he was deep in his studies when I entered the library to find him sitting before a large-scale map pinned up across the book-shelves, a map of all the earth upon which he had placed little red-headed pins here and there. Indeed, at the moment he had just identified a place in South America, when he turned to greet me quite cheerfully despite a rather haggard look.

After breakfast we plunged immediately into the correlation of earlier notes and references made by the professor, as usual, about ancient cults, curious present-day survivals of strange worship, and the like, and I observed that same care and reticence about my employer which I had so readily noticed from the beginning. Our work was leisurely, if obscure to me; there was no sense of pressure at any time, and I found myself growing very interested in the strange beings which, according to my employer, had been worshipped terrestrially and interplanetarily by pre-human races of creatures. As day followed day, these shadowy great beings and their followers began to take on a subconscious existence just across the borderland from reality, a tenuous, fantastic shaping up in my imagination, though not without certain dark hints of terror and awful dread which came upon me from time to time.

On the third day of this work, the professor provided a startling little epilogue to the curious incident of the sailor Fernandez and his story. He was at the moment reading in *The New York Times,* when I saw a smile briefly touch his lips; he reached for a scissors and clipped an item which he handed to me, saying that I might add it to the file on Fernandez and mark the file *Closed.*

The item was of wire service origin, date-lined from Lima, Peru, and read:

> A localized earth shock in the Cordillera de Vilcanota last night completely destroyed a rocky hill along the river between the deserted Inca city of Machu Picchu and the fortress of Salapunco. Señorita Ysola Montez, instructor at the Indian school which is kept in one room of the abandoned fortress, reported that the shock came with the force of an explosion, threw her out of bed, and aroused the Indians for many miles around. Despite the evidence of the shattered hill, which apparently collapsed into an underground river or reservoir doubtless stemming from the gorge, seismographs at Lima recorded no disturbance of the earth in the vicinity. Scientists are inclined to regard the incident as evidence only of a local collapse brought about by a weakening of the cavernous understructure of the hill below Salapunco. A number of Indians of the vicinity, whose presence at the scene has been unaccounted for, were killed.

3

IT WAS AGAIN A NEWSPAPER account which was responsible for the second, and also subsequently, for the last of those strange dreams I had in the house on Curwen Street. So long a time had passed since the previous dream—almost two months, for it was now mid-August—that I had come to look back upon that initial sleep-bound adventure as a remarkable effect of the house itself, the possible result of a change in my way of existence when I removed from Boston. Moreover, within the fortnight immediately past, Dr. Shrewsbury had begun the dictation of his second book, designed to follow *An Investigation into the Myth-Patterns of Latter-day Primitives with Especial*

Reference to the R'lyeh Text; he had entitled this second book *Cthulhu in the Necronomicon,* and for the most part it was utterly incomprehensible to me, being a book written for savants by a savant, but from time to time there occurred strangely stirring passages, which now and then seemed to touch upon my own boundaries of recent experience in a disturbing fashion. He was dictating such paragraphs on the morning of the day which was to end with the second of those remarkable dreams.

"It never seems to occur to the man of even superior intelligence that these incredible myth-patterns have their survival in the present day, and yet it should not seem at all impossible, for it is manifest that their beliefs are centered upon beings which are for the most part co-existent with all time and conterminous with space. Moreover, their extra-dimensional properties allow for much greater latitude than the dimensional laws of our own sciences. By denying this, by implication they deny also that it might be possible to systematically hunt down and close the openings from that borderland; for it has been shown in repeated instances that the Great Old Ones cannot come forth unless they are summoned by those minions who are ever ready to serve them here and on other stars and planets. I refer the skeptical to the occurrence at Devil Reef off Innsmouth and direct their attention to those curiously batrachian survivals one may yet find in isolated places in the vicinity of both Innsmouth and Newburyport, as well as to the thinly disguised fiction of it by the late H. P. Lovecraft. I commend him likewise to the study of certain parallelisms—a comparison between Ithaqua, the Wind-Walker of the ancient myth-patterns, and the Wendigo of the northwoods Indians; between the Devourer, the War-God of the Quichua-Ayars, and Cthulhu of the mythos—to mention but two which occur to me and to which I have given some little thought. The similarities are almost instantly apparent.

"By this persistent denial of certain evidential aspects which are beyond scientific explanation as we now define science, the doubters make it impossible or well-nigh impossible to utilize the known enmities among the lesser beings of evil who would ultimately once again assume sway over the destiny of the planets, and who are unified only in their incessant war upon the impregnable Elder Gods who must ultimately awake and renew the spells which bind this evil spawn and which are now weakening as the eons pass since their initial imprisonment. They would thus thrust aside the possibil-

ity of increasing the tension between such followers of Cthulhu as those batrachian Deep Ones, who inhabit the many-columned city of Y'ha-nthlei deep in the Atlantic off the blasted port of Innsmouth, as well as sunken R'lyeh, and the bat-winged interplanetary travellers, who are half-man, half-beast, and serve Cthulhu's half-brother, Him Who Is Not To Be Named, Hastur the Unspeakable; of setting against one another the amorphous spawn who serve the mad, faceless Nyarlathotep and the Black Goat of the Woods, Shub-Niggurath, and the Flame Creatures of Cthugha, among whom there exists eternal rivalry which might well be turned into devastating fury. Let the servants be in turn summoned to the aid of some enlightened brain, so that the openings for Cthulhu may be stopped by the aid of those air-beings serving Hastur and Lloigor; let the minions of Cthugha destroy the hidden places within the earth where Nyarlathotep and Shub-Niggurath and their hideous offspring dwell. Knowledge is power. But knowledge is also madness, and it is not for the weak to take arms against these hellish beings. As Lovecraft wrote, 'Man must be prepared to accept notions of the cosmos, and of his own place in the seething vortex of time, whose merest mention is paralyzing.'"

At this point, Dr. Shrewsbury had completed the first volume of his second book—a book never destined to be finished, though I did not know it then—and he directed me thereupon to complete my transcription in triplicate, proof, and ship the remaining manuscript to the printer, together with a check to cover the cost of production; for no publisher would risk money by bringing out such a book as this, which, though it purported to be factual, had every aspect of the wildest, most incredible fiction, besides which the highly colored romances of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells paled into utter insignificance, for the professor swung boldly away from the terrestrial scene with such conviction that it was impossible to read what he had written without a kind of paralyzing apprehension, and an increased awareness of forces and powers beyond the comprehension of men.

As I turned to the transcription, my employer took up that day's paper, glancing rapidly down each column, and going from page to page. He had got perhaps to the sixth or seventh page when he gave an exclamation half of delight, half of alarm, and reached for the scissors to clip a brief article which he handed to me with instructions to begin a new file. I put it to one

side, and only when I had completed my work on the first portion of *Cthulhu in the Necronomicon* did I turn to it again.

That was in late afternoon, and by that time I had observed in my employer a steadily increasing excitement, as if he were laboring under some inner pressure and could not wait for the time appointed for its relief. The article was brief, and couched in the usual dignified language of the *Times:*

> London, August 17: A mystery that might have come from the pages of one of Charles Fort's remarkable books is suggested by the case of Nayland Massie, a dockworker who has been absent from his home for seven months. Mr. Massie turned up the other day. He was found wandering on the streets and identified by marks he carried. He could not speak a word of English, but speaks a strange, foreign tongue, which no one has as yet been able to identify. His condition is serious. The eminent specialist on unusual diseases, Sir Lenden Petra, who is an accomplished linguist, has been called into consultation. There is no clue whatever to the place where Mr. Massie might have spent the seven months of his strange absence.

It was an account, in short, of which there were many similar narratives in the files I had taken opportunity to glance over from time to time, at Dr. Shrewsbury's direction, and it seemed incredible that it could stimulate the two dreams which were to come.

For that night came the second of that unbelievable trio of dreams. And it was presaged by precisely the same events as the first—by Dr. Shrewsbury's insistence upon our early retirement in order to be ready for more intense work tomorrow, by a drink of his golden mead, and by the quick drowsiness and the dream-haunted sleep that followed. I turn again to the account given to Dr. DeVoto and transcribed by him under the heading of *Dream II.*

> "Professor Shrewsbury came to my room, as before, once again carrying pad and pencils which he gave to me after he had awakened me. Everything happened as before. After he had opened the win-

dows and shouted that strange command into space, we stepped out and found ourselves once more astride the huge bat-winged creatures of the first dream. I remember making an examination of them, but apart from the curiously repellant feeling as of human flesh under my hands, and furred wings, I was not able to ascertain what these creatures were like, but it now seemed to me that Professor Shrewsbury *talked* to them.

"Again in a short while we were put down, but this time it was soon apparent that we were in no isolated locality, for lights glowed all around us, and off to our left there were great beacons and a floodlit field. Dr. Shrewsbury seemed to know precisely where we were and he made for the buildings beyond this floodlit field with as much haste as he could muster. We were not far away, and it was soon evident that we were following a country lane. As we drew near to the floodlit area and the buildings, I began to be aware of a vague familiarity, as if I had been in this place before, not too long ago. Presently I recognized the surroundings; we were at Croydon Aerodrome, which I had visited three years before as an undergraduate. The professor's purpose was soon clear; he had gone there only to get a taxicab, into which he bundled me and then sought a city directory inside the nearest building. When he came out he directed the driver to take us to an address in Park Lane, and to wait there for us.

"We were taken to the Park Lane address and applied for admittance, which we did not gain until my employer took out his card and wrote across it, 'In regard to the case of Nayland Massie.' After this had been taken in, we were permitted to enter, and we were conducted into the presence of an elderly and very dignified man, whom Professor Shrewsbury addressed as Dr. Petra. My employer immediately indicated his interest in the case of the dockworker Massie, and explained that he had come by air from his home in America to determine whether he might not be able to identify and translate the language which the mysteriously absent dockworker now spoke.

"Dr. Petra was immediately most helpful. He explained that Massie had been only an illiterate fellow, but that in this language

which he now spoke, together with a mixture of occasional Greek and Latin words, he betrayed a high degree of intelligence. In short though the physical man who had returned from whatever place he had been was the same, the mental man was obviously not similar. Moreover, his physical condition was such that he was not expected to live long, for he had apparently been exposed to rigorous climates, and conditioned to violent climactic changes, but that conditioning was rapidly wearing off and he would not be able to withstand the damage being done to his body in that change. Today's *London Times* had a rather complete summary of the case, if Dr. Shrewsbury would care to have Dr. Petra's copy.

"My employer accepted the paper and gave it to me. I put it into my pocket. My employer then suggested that he would like to interview the patient, if possible. Sir Lenden Petra ordered his own car out and accompanied us across London to the East India Dock Road, where the dockworker Massie was being kept, in a kind of coma, but able at times to answer certain questions put to him in Latin and Greek.

"We were admitted by his nurse, and taken at once to the bedside.

"There lay a man in his middle-forties, motionless, his eyes open and clearly antipathetic to the shaded light that glowed from a lamp nearby. At our entrance, though he did not turn his head, he began to make a low murmuring sound, whereupon my employer signalled to me to be ready to take down whatever he translated.

"'There,' said Dr. Petra, 'that is the language. I observe that it has certain repetitive sounds and constructions suggesting that he is speaking a formal language—but no one in London seems to know what it is, save that it seems very ancient.'

"'Yes,' replied Dr. Shrewsbury, 'it is R'lyehian!'

"Dr. Petra seemed astonished. 'You know it?'

"'Yes, it is a pre-human language, still spoken in certain hidden places both terrestrially and extraterrestrially.'

"The sounds that now came from the dockworker's lips were as follows: *'Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah-nagl fhtagn.'* This Dr. Shrewsbury readily translated as: 'In his house at R'lyeh dead

Cthulhu waits dreaming.' He then addressed a query to Massie, whereupon the dockworker turned his head and stared at us. Dr. Petra said that it was the first sign of cognizance he had made.

"The following brief conversation now ensued, Dr. Shrewsbury speaking in the same language as the dockworker.

"'Where were you?'

"'With those who serve Him Who Is To Come.'

"'Who is He?'

"'Great Cthulhu. In his house at R'lyeh He is not dead, but only sleeping. He shall come when He is summoned.'

"'Who will summon Him?'

"'Those who worship Him.'

"'Where is R'lyeh?'

"'It is in the sea.'

"'But you were not under water.'

"'No, I was on the island.'

"'Ah! What island?'

"'It was thrown up by the eruption of the ocean floor.'

"'Is it part of R'lyeh?'

"'It is part of R'lyeh.'

"'Where is it?'

"'In the Pacific Ocean near the Indies.'

"'What latitude?'

"'I think it is S. Latitude 49° 51', W. Longitude 128° 34'. It is off New Zealand, south of the Indies.'

"'Did you see Him?'

"'No. But He was there.'

"'How were you brought there?'

"'I was taken by something in the water of the Thames one night. They brought me.'

"'What was it?'

"'It was like a man, but it was not a man. It could swim in all waters. It had webbed hands, and its face was like a frog's.'

"At this juncture, Massie began to breathe deeply, in exhaustion, and Dr. Petra ended the conversation, apologetically, but Dr. Shrewsbury brushed his apologies away, saying that he had heard

enough, and making the same kind of vague explanation to Dr. Petra which he was in the habit of making to me in the house on Curwen Street. My employer was obviously in great haste to get away, and as soon as possible we parted from Dr. Petra, and made our way on foot to a desolate section along the East India Docks, where, now in the darkness of night's depths, Dr. Shrewsbury paused and made his strange ululant whistling and commanded, *'Iä! Iä! Hastur! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!'*

"Then immediately our bat-winged steeds came out of the heavens and we returned to the ancient gambrel roofs of witch-cursed Arkham."

More even than the dreams themselves, the hiatus between the second and the third of this unholy trio sent me in the end to Dr. Asenath DeVoto for a consultation, fearing for my sanity. For, despite the fact that I was manifestly in the house of Dr. Shrewsbury on Curwen Street, working with my employer at the preparation of some chemicals, at which he was feverishly engaged for what seemed many hours, the curious and grotesquely disturbing fact about the time between the second and third dreams was this: *there did not seem to be an hiatus at all!* I had lost, it seemed, the power or capacity to distinguish between dream and reality; I no longer knew which was which, for all the events of that inexplicable hiatus, however clear they seemed to me, had the same quality as the dreams.

Were we in that house on Curwen Street preparing those mysterious packages which Dr. Shrewsbury ultimately brought to his desk in the study? Or was I caught in the mesh of a dream so profound that I could not waken to reality? It troubled me then, though it troubles me less now. But at that time, there was present in the house such an air of dire necessity, such a suggestion of terrible peril, such an urgency, that food and drink—save for that strange golden mead and its effect—seemed unnecessary, and the ordinary pursuits of the day were given over to the task before us, veiled as always in that secrecy which the professor maintained in the face of everything.

Dr. DeVoto took all these impressions down, as he did the dreams; he made no comment on them, and circumstances made it impossible for me to see him again; for events took place with terrible swiftness after the occurrence of the third dream. I cannot be sure that that third and final cata-

clysmic dream took place on that night or on some other night; or even that it did not take place by day, or that it was not in sequence a part of the second dream. All I know is that it began as before, with the arrival of Dr. Shrewsbury in my room, the summoning of the strange winged beasts which carried us, and its beginning differed only in that we were this time burdened with the packages Dr. Shrewsbury had prepared.

The third and last dream, as Dr. DeVoto took it down, was as follows:

"We were put down on a strange, bleak place of utterly alien aspect. The sky was dark, forbidding; it seemed to me that fogs of a strange, unearthly green color moved eternally about us. From time to time I had chilling glimpses of strange monolithic structures in part ruins, overgrown with seaweed, now drying, hanging limply from the superstructures before us. All around us was the sound of the sea, and the earth underfoot was of a greenish-black muck; it was earth similar to that in the cavern of my first dream.

"The professor made his way cautiously forward until we came to a portal, before which lay many lesser stones, from among which the professor picked up a curious stone in the shape of a five-pointed star and gave it to me, saying: 'The earthquake evidently broke away the encrustation of these talismans put there by the Elder Gods when Cthulhu was imprisoned. This is one of the doorways to the Outside.'

"He took one of the packages and unwrapped it, and I saw that it contained explosives of singular potency. These he directed me to place strategically around the portal. Despite my awe of my surroundings, I did so. For the surroundings, whenever the mists cleared a little, were such as to leave a man breathless with wonder. The ruins which still stood partially here and there, untouched by the quake which had caused this island to rise up from the depths, were of buildings of such vast angles and such colossal stone surfaces, and were moreover marked with such horrific hieroglyphs and impious images that I was overcome with the most intense feeling of dread. The angles and planes of this portion of the great sunken city were non-Euclidean, loathsomely suggestive of the spheres and dimensions of which Professor Shrewsbury had been

writing only a little while ago, of dimensions hideously apart from our own.

"The portal at which we worked framed a great carven door, which stood partly open, but not yet so far that it could permit entry. I do not know precisely when that door began to open imperceptibly wider, but it was the professor who first noticed the *things* which were slithering over the monolithic rocks toward us from out of the sea beyond us. He had set up the apparatus necessary for the detonation which he meant to set off, and casually pointed out the scaly creatures with their webbed hands and feet, and their half-human, half-batrachian features, cautioning me not to be afraid, for the five-pointed stone he had given me would protect me from them, if not from 'Him down there.'

"At this moment he noticed that the door seemed to stand a little wider. 'Was that door so far open at first?' he asked agitatedly.

"I said I did not think so.

"'Then, in Heaven's name, come away!'

"Even before I stepped back, I was conscious of two things impinging upon my senses—a charnel stench that seemed to come from the now slowly opening door, and a nasty slopping sound, a soggy sloshing that was paralyzingly frightful. It was this latter that sent us reeling back. Dr. Shrewsbury ran for the detonator, even as the door swung wide and a thing of abysmal horror loomed there to fill it. I cannot describe it. It was similar to the thing in the subterranean lake in the Cordillera de Vilcanota in Peru, yet it was somehow more hideous, more awful, for it did not have the multiplicity of tentacles, but rather a protoplasmic formlessness which was clearly directed by an intelligence which could shape it in any way it chose. Thus, its first appearance was as of a mass of doughy flesh filling the entire doorway; then suddenly a great malign eye appeared in its mass; and at the same time the amorphous mass began to ooze out around the doorway with an ugly, nauseatingly retching sound, accompanied by a wild fluted whistling.

"At that moment Dr. Shrewsbury pushed the detonator, and the stones around the portal burst asunder and heavenward before

the terrible force of the explosive which Dr. Shrewsbury had brought. The monolithic pillars and slabs broke and collapsed upon the thing in the doorway.

"Without wasting a moment, Dr. Shrewsbury chanted his command to the winged creatures, who came out of the fog-bound heavens to aid our escape from that accursed island. But we did not get away before I saw yet one thing more, even more awful than what had gone before. For the thing which had been blown to shreds by the explosion, and crushed by the vast monolithic stones, was *reforming* like water running together, shaping itself together by means of a thousand tentacles of oozing protoplasm, pushing its way with incredible rapidity over the green-black muck of the earth toward us even as that earth began to tremble and quake, possibly as a result of the thunderous, deafening detonation which may have set off subterranean rumblings to disturb the precarious existence of this island.

"Then we mounted the bat-winged creatures and returned to the house on Curwen Street."

4

IT WAS AFTER THIS DREAM that I sought the advice of Dr. Asenath DeVoto in Boston. Certain events, prosaic enough in themselves, but with such terrible implications, had taken place, that I could no longer be sure of my sanity; I had to have the assurance of a competent psychiatrist—though, ironically, the only immediate advice DeVoto could give me after hearing what I had to say, was to leave the house on Curwen Street and Arkham as soon as it was possible to do so, for it was conclusively shown, he held, that Dr. Shrewsbury and his ancient house had a deleterious effect on me. He made no attempt to explain the curious facts of which I grew cognizant after I awoke from that shuddersome third dream, beyond brushing them off as hallucinatory convictions which had been made to fit into my dreams after their actual occurrence, suggesting that in my somewhat abnormal state I had brought into being the physical facts which tended to show that *the dreams in the house on Curwen Street were not dreams at all, but horrible, grotesque fantasies in which I had somehow taken actual, physical part!*

How else could I explain what had taken place, and what was yet to take place?

For the events following that trio of dreams now occurred with such rapidity that it was nothing short of astounding that I should not before have stumbled upon the key to the mystery, incredible as it was, unready as I was to accept it or even to recognize it. Even then, perhaps, if it had not been for the agitation of Professor Shrewsbury, that profound disturbance of his equanimity which prevented him from removing my shoes, I might not have known.

For when I awoke on that morning, I discovered that my shoes were covered with greenish-black muck—*the same soil as that of that hellish, accursed Pacific isle of the last dream! Not only that, but in my pocket, just where I had put it in the dream, was that strange stone in the shape of a five-pointed star, covered with hieroglyphs utterly beyond my understanding!*

There might—*there might,* I say, have been a logical explanation of these two single factors; it could have been possible for anyone, who might have had some knowledge of my dreams, to have doctored my shoes, and got ready such a stone; but no one could have "planted" the third fact, so prosaic in itself that its very mundane aspects made its appearance all the more frightful. For in the inner pocket of my coat I found a copy of the *London Times,* folded back to that very *Fortean Mystery* of the dockworker we had visited, *a copy of the paper of the day before, so recent that it could by no natural power on earth have reached the house on Curwen Street!*

This discovery sent me to that unsatisfactory visit with Dr. DeVoto, and it brought me back to confront Dr. Shrewsbury. But my employer's agitation was such that I was forestalled in what I wished to say not only by the pallor and haggardness of his features, but by the rush of words that greeted me immediately on my return from Boston.

"Where have you been, Andrew? But, no matter—hurry now; take my files down to the library of Miskatonic University. There some future student may make good use of them."

With deep astonishment I saw that he had been going over his files in my absence, and had made selections of various folders and boxes of material which he wished to remove to a more permanent setting. But his agitation, and the strangeness of his manner gave me little time in which to contemplate his behavior, for, having thus urged me to make all possible

speed to the library with his precious documents and papers, he went about the room selecting further material to add to the growing mound in the middle of the study floor—books, the manuscript of the first part of his second book, old texts, notes he had made from the borrowed copies of the Pnakotic Manuscripts, the *Necronomicon,* and others, particularly a sealed folio which had been labeled in his hand the *Celaeno Fragments,* and which Dr. Shrewsbury had been careful to make clear I was not to read.

All the time he alternately murmured aloud—such phrases as, "I should not have taken him! It was a mistake!" while he looked at me with a kind of weary commiseration—or, what was still more startling and frightening, he paused from time to time and listened, his eyes turned toward that side of the house which looked out across the street upon the shore of the Miskatonic River, as if he expected to hear the sound of his approaching doom. So unnerving was this, that when I left the house I cast a furtive, fearful glance toward the river shore myself; but in the afternoon sunlight it was a reassuring sight indeed.

When I returned, I found my employer standing in deep absorption before the opened folio of the *Celaeno Fragments.* And once again I had evidence of his strange sensitivity, for I had come into the room very quietly, soundlessly, and his back was turned to me; yet he began to speak the moment I entered.

"My only question is whether there is not danger in giving these notes to the world. Though I ought not to fear that there are many who would place any credence in what I took down from these great stones. Fort is dead, Lovecraft is gone—" He shook his head.

I came up behind him and looked over his shoulder. My eyes fell upon what was obviously a recipe, but so filled was it with strange names, that I looked to the text below. What I read there supplied another link in the damning chain of evidence pointing to hideous possibilities in the voids of time and space, hitherto unknown to man. For there, in Dr. Shrewsbury's fine script, was written this legend: "The golden mead of the Elder Gods renders the drinker insensible to the effects of time and space, so that he may travel in these dimensions; moreover, it heightens his sensory perceptions so that he remains constantly in a state bordering upon dream . . ."

This far I read before my employer closed the folio and set about sealing it once more.

"The mead!" I exclaimed. "Your mead!"

"Yes, yes, Andrew," he said quickly. "How else did you suppose . . . ? But I forget; one ought not to permit one's imagination to trap one."

"Imagination!" I protested. "Is it imagination that I had mud from that island on my shoes this morning, and the stone in my pocket, and the *London Times* in my coat? I don't know—I only suspect in the light of what I've learned here, how it was done—but I know we were there."

He looked at me for a long moment contemplatively.

"Weren't we?" I demanded.

Even then I hoped that somehow he would have a logical, reasonable explanation to offer me; heaven knows how eagerly I would have accepted it! But he only shook his head wearily, touched my arm as if to reassure me, and said, "Yes."

"And that night in June—that second night, after we were in the cave—you went back with your explosive and blasted that hellish place. I heard you scrambling down the rocks, I heard the blast . . ."

"Ah! Then you took some mead that night. You were in my room."

I nodded.

"Perhaps I should have told you. But it was my error—I should not have taken you along. I was in one phase too careful, and in another too careless, assuming wrongly that you would never know. But now they have seen us, now they know who it is blasting and sealing those doors from their eon-old borderland—" He shook his head once more. "Now—now it is too late!"

His tone was so ominous that for a moment I could say nothing whatever. Then, a little thickly, I asked, "What do you mean?"

"Even now they are pursuing us. There is activity below Devil Reef off Innsmouth in the city of Y'ha-nthlei, and great beings have come from R'lyeh. Listen! Listen to those hellish footsteps!—But I forget, you cannot, you have not had your sensibilities forever made keener as I had in those twenty years."

"Yes, those twenty years," I repeated, my mind flashing back to that curiously foreboding scene in the library of Miskatonic University. "Where were you in that time?"

"I was on Celaeno—in that great library of ancient monolithic stones with their books and hieroglyphs stolen from the Elder Gods."

He stopped suddenly, cocking his head a little to one side, and after listening in that position very briefly, he began to tremble, his mouth twisted in distaste and loathing, and he turned on me with a curt order to hurry, to carry the remaining material to the Miskatonic University Library, and to come back even faster, for the hour was rapidly approaching evening, and I was not to spend another night in this house. When I returned, he said, everything would be ready for my departure.

So indeed it was, and the professor was more agitated than I had ever previously seen him. I had been subjected to the always maddening delay of red tape pertaining to the acceptance of Dr. Shrewsbury's books and papers, including a searching interview with Dr. Llanfer, the director of the library, who, after a glance through my first load had asked that I be sent into his office so that he could tell me that he had ordered my employer's papers placed in the locked vault with the single rare copy of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred's *Necronomicon* in the possession of Miskatonic University. The result of this delay was that time passed more quickly than I had thought, for it was at sundown that I returned to the house on Curwen Street.

"Good God! my boy, where were you!" demanded Dr. Shrewsbury.

But he gave me no time to answer, for once again he stopped to listen. And this time I, too, felt what he must have felt—that powerful surging forward of an aura of age-old evil, as if the latent possibilities of the old house's atmosphere had come suddenly into malign life; I, too, heard—at first only a curious water sound, as of something swimming, and then that terrible trembling of the bowels of the earth, shuddering upward from below, *as if some great being walked in the watery places under the earth!*

"You must go at once," said my employer in a troubled voice. "You have the five-pointed stone from the island?"

I nodded.

He seized my arm in a tenacious grip. "Do you remember the formula for summoning the interstellar creatures who serve Hastur?"

Again I nodded.

He took from his pocket the counterpart of the little whistle he had blown upon and also a small phial which, I saw, contained some of that strange golden mead. "Here, then—keep this with you, and the stone, too. The Deep Ones cannot hurt you if you carry the stone; but the stone alone is powerless against the others. Go to Boston, to New York, anywhere—but

leave Arkham, leave this accursed place. And if you hear that walker in the depths of the earth, in the waters under the earth, do not hesitate—take the mead, keep the star by you, and repeat the formula. They will come for you. They will take you to Celaeno, where I am going once again until the others will give up seeking me. But keep the stone; I did not have it, and at first they tortured me—but have no fear, they will not touch you. If you must come, I will be there." I took the phial, filled with a thousand questions I wanted to ask but could not. For the aura of the house was oppressive with terror; its very air throbbed with menace, and from under the house came such a wave of sheer horror that all my senses cried aloud for escape.

"They are at the mouth of the Miskatonic now," said the professor thoughtfully. "But I am ready. Some of them are coming up the river—soon now, soon now . . ." He turned on me once more. "But go, Andrew. *Go!*"

He made as if to thrust me forth, but in his sudden effort he fell sideways and struck one of the shelves nearby so that his glasses were knocked off—and what I saw then sent me screaming from that accursed house on Curwen Street into the fog-bound darkness outside. Did I dream, too, in that frightful flight that creatures with webbed feet and hands whose great batrachian eyes gleamed phosphorescently at me out of the darkness were creeping from the water of the Miskatonic River across the street? I did not hesitate, I did not once pause. Clutching the whistle and the phial of golden liquid close to me, I ran for my life, haunted by the sight of Professor Shrewsbury's face as I saw it in the half-darkness of that doomed house. *For though I had seen him read his papers and his notes, though he had described appearances, though he had given a thousand evidences of his keen vision, above that strange second sight he seemed to have, in that maddening moment when his glasses were struck from his face, I saw where his eyes should have been the dark pits of empty sockets!*

5

ONLY A FORTNIGHT HAS gone by since the events I have chronicled. The house on Curwen Street was totally destroyed by fire on the night of my wild flight, and Dr. Shrewsbury has been presumed to have perished in the holocaust; but though I have pursued the most assiduous inquiry, I have been unable to find proof that any human bones were found in the ruins. I can only suppose that Dr. Shrewsbury somehow made his escape. It seems

clear to me now, as I write, under the pressure of a fear far more terrible than that I shared with my one-time employer, that Dr. Shrewsbury had set himself upon the trail of Great Cthulhu, intent upon closing all avenues to the Outside. That, I say, is the trend of such evidence as I have been able to amass. And he had learned how to utilize the strange creatures from other alien dimensions out of time and space, in his pursuit of Cthulhu, intent upon saving the world he knew from enslavement to a ghastly era of eon-old evil completely beyond the comprehension of mankind!

I have looked up Celaeno. It is that star in the Pleiades which lies between Alcyone and Electra on the one side, and Maia and Taygeta on the other. It does not seem possible—and yet, if what Dr. Shrewsbury wrote or suspected is correct, the dark Lake of Hali is not far away, near Aldebaran, the abode of Him Who Is Not To Be Named, Hastur the Unspeakable, who is served, these ancient legends will have it, by strange bat-winged creatures who can travel in time and space. . . .

For the past few hours, here in my room in Boston, I have been trying to tell myself again, as so often I have done, that it was all a ghastly dream, one of those strange adventures of mental dislocation which sometimes happen to men. But I am no longer able to say this with much belief. For as I came home this evening from my frugal supper, I had a glimpse of a shuddersome countenance, and once more that curiously grotesque Tenniel illustration of the footman for the Duchess in *Alice in Wonderland* flashed into mind, and then, those others—those web-handed creatures in the guise of men who haunted my dreams! And now, surely it is not my imagination that is responsible for the conviction that something walks beneath me in the waters of the earth! Surely I, who have never been overly blessed with imagination, cannot be dreaming this!

For out of the depths beneath the house comes a horrible sucking sound, as of great protoplasmic flesh scuffing along ponderously in a place of waters and muck—a sound like that nasty, sloppy, nauseating slithering we heard on that hellish Pacific island just before the Thing came oozing out from behind that hideous carven door! I have locked my room and thrown open the window, but everywhere there is menace—I cannot turn without fear, I fancy I see those great monolithic stones with their terrible bas-reliefs looking out at me from every corner of the room, or Professor Shrewsbury's

face with those horrible, pitted sockets where his eyes should have been, or the batrachian frog-men. . . .

And now—now that the Pleiades and Celaeno are above the horizon in the northwest, I have taken the golden mead; I have gone to the window and blown upon that curiously carven whistle Professor Shrewsbury gave me in that last frantic hour together, I have stood there and called forth into the spaceless void of time his words—*"Iä! Iä! Hastur! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!"*

The footsteps continue—ghastly, sloshing sounds—they seem just under the house now; and outside there is the terrible slapping sound like that made by those awful web-footed creatures that slithered toward us over the rocks on that Pacific island. . . .

But now—something—Great God! Wings! *What beings at the window! Iä! Iä! Hastur fhtagn . . . !*

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EPILOGUE FROM THE BOSTON *HERALD* FOR SEPTEMBER 3

No further clue to the strange and remarkable disappearance of Andrew Phelan, 28, of 17 Thoreau Drive, has been unearthed. It is assumed that the young man effected his disappearance voluntarily; the door of his room was locked and, though one window of his room stood open, there is no evidence to show that he dropped to the ground below or mounted to the roof, both places having been subjected to the most minute scrutiny. No motive can be ascribed for his act. However, a cousin of Mr. Phelan expressed some doubt about his sanity at the time of his disappearance, deposing that he had seemed to be listening for sounds as of some supernatural pursuer. Since this manifestation of irrationality coincides with the strange manuscript he left behind him, it is believed that in some fashion, for reasons unknown, Mr. Phelan made away with himself. . . .



BEING THE DEPOSITION OF ABEL KEANE

1

ABEL KEANE . . . Abel Keane . . . Abel Keane. . . ."

Sometimes I am constrained to speak my name aloud, as if to reassure myself that all is as before, that indeed I am Abel Keane; and I find myself walking to the mirror and looking at myself, scrutinizing the familiar lineaments for any sign of change. As if there must be change! As if surely, some time, change must come, the change that marks the experiences of that week. Or was it but a week? Or less? I do not any longer have assurance of anything.

It is a terrible thing to lose faith in the world of daylight and the night of stars, to feel that at any time all the known laws of space and time may be abrogated, may be thrust aside as by some sorcery, by ancient evil known only to a few men, whose voices are indeed voices crying in the wilderness.

I have hesitated until now to tell what I know of the fire which destroyed a great portion of a certain seaport town on the Massachusetts coast, of the abomination which existed there, but events have dictated that

I hesitate no longer. There are things men should not know, and it is always difficult for any one man to decide whether to make certain facts known, or to hold them in abeyance. There was a reason for the fire—a reason known only to two people, though surely there were others who suspected—but not outside that shunned town. It has been said that if any man had a vision of the incredible vastnesses of outer space and the knowledge of what exists there, that alone would drive him stark raving mad. But there are things that go on within the boundaries of our own small earth which are no less frightening, things that bind us to the entire cosmos, to colossi of time and space, to evil and horror so old, so ancient that the entire history of mankind is but a vapor in the air beside them.

Of such was the reason for that destructive fire, that fire which destroyed far more than it was meant to destroy, block after block of that loathed town across to the Manuxet on the one side and to the shore of the sea on another. They called it arson—but only for a little while. They found some of those little stones—but there was nothing but one mention in the papers of either arson or those peculiar stone pieces. The townspeople saw to that; they were quick to suppress it; their own fire examiners put out an entirely different story. They said that the man who was lost in the fire had fallen asleep beside his lamp and had knocked it over, and that that was the way the fire started. . . .

But it was arson, technically speaking—justifiable arson. . . .

2

EVIL IS THE SPECIAL PROVINCE, surely, of the student of divinity.

Such was I on that Summer night when I unlocked the door of my room at my lodging house, Number 17, Thoreau Drive, in the city of Boston, Massachusetts—and found lying on my bed a strange man, clad in alien garments, lying in a deep sleep from which I could not at first awaken him. Since my door was locked, he must have entered by way of the open window—but of how he had come, by what incredible passage, I was not immediately to know.

After my initial surprise had passed, I examined my visitor. He was a young man of approximately thirty years of age; he was clean-shaven, dark-

skinned, and lithe; he was clothed in loose-flowing robes of a material foreign to me, and he wore sandals made from the leather of some beast whose identity was unknown to me. Though it was evident that he carried various articles in the pockets of that strange clothing, I did not examine them. He was in a sleep so deep that it was impossible to awaken him, and evidence showed that he had virtually fallen across the bed and had gone instantly to sleep.

I discovered at once that there was something familiar about his features—familiar with that strange insistence so commonly associated with people whom one has known before, perhaps casually, but nevertheless has known. Either I had my visitor's acquaintance, or I had seen his picture somewhere. It occurred to me at this point that I might well attempt to learn his identity while he slept, and accordingly I drew a chair up to the bed and sat down beside my visitor, intending to practise auto-suggestion, which I had learned from indulgence in my lesser professional existence—for, while working my way through divinity school, I appeared thrice weekly on public and occasionally on private stages as an amateur hypnotist, and some small study of the human mind had enabled me to accomplish various trivial successes in mind-reading and allied matters.

However, deep as his sleep was, he was *aware.*

I cannot explain this even now, but it was as if, though his body slept, his senses did not, for he spoke as I leaned above him, motivated by my intention; and he spoke out of a patent awareness which must be related to his strange way of life about which I learned later, a development from a supersensory existence.

"Wait," he said. And then, "Be patient, Abel Keane."

And suddenly a most curious reaction was manifest within myself; it felt precisely as if someone or something had invaded me, as if my visitor spoke to me without words to tell me his name, for his lips did not appear to move, yet I was distinctly aware of the impression of words. "I am Andrew Phelan. I left this room two years ago; I have come back for a little while." Thus directly, thus simply, I knew; and I knew too that I had seen Andrew Phelan's likeness in the Boston papers at the time of his utterly outré disappearance from this very room two years previously, a disappearance never satisfactorily explained.

Excitement possessed me.

So strong was my impression of his *awareness,* despite his aspect of sleep, that I could not forebear asking him, "Where have you been?"

"Celaeno," came his prompt reply, but whether he actually spoke, or whether he merely communicated it to me without words, I cannot now say.

And where was Celaeno? I wondered.

He woke at two o'clock in the morning. Tired myself, I had fallen into a light slumber, from which I was awakened by his hand on my shoulder. I was startled and gazed up to find his firm eyes looking steadily and appraisingly at me. He was still clad in his curious robe, but his first thought was for clothing.

"Have you an extra suit?"

"Yes."

"I shall need to borrow it. We are not unlike in build, and I cannot go out like this. Will you mind?"

"No—by all means."

"I am sorry to have deprived you of your bed, but my long journey tired me very much."

"If I may ask, how did you get in?"

He gestured to the window.

"Why here?"

"Because this room was my point of contact," he answered enigmatically. He then looked at his watch. "The suit now, if you don't mind. My time is short."

I felt impelled to get the clothing he wished, and did so. When he disrobed, I saw that he was very strong, very muscular, and he moved with an agility that made me doubt my first guess as to his age. I said nothing as he dressed; he remarked casually on the good fit of the suit, which was not my best, though it was neat and clean and had just been pressed. I told him equally as casually that he was welcome to it for as long as he needed it.

"The landlady is still Mrs. Brier?" he asked then.

"Yes."

"I hope you will say nothing to her of me; it would only trouble her."

"To no one?"

"No one."

He began to move to the door, and instantly I apprehended that he meant to be gone. At the same time I was aware of not wanting him to leave

without imparting to me more information about the mystery which had remained unsolved for two years. Rashly, I sprang up and threw myself between him and the door.

He looked at me with calm, amused eyes.

"Wait!" I cried. "You can't go like this! What is it you want? Let me get it for you."

He smiled. "I seek evil, Mr. Keane—evil that is more terrible than anything taught in your school of divinity, believe me."

"Evil is my field, Mr. Phelan."

"I guarantee nothing," he replied. "The risks are too great for ordinary men."

An insane impulse took possession of me. I was seized with the urgent desire to accompany my visitor, even if it became necessary to hypnotize him. I fixed his strange eyes with mine, I reached out my hands—and then something happened to me. I found myself suddenly on another plane, in another dimension, as it were. I felt that I had taken Andrew Phelan's place on the bed, and yet accompanied him in spirit. For instantly, soundlessly, painlessly, I was out of this world. Nothing else would describe the sensations I experienced for the remainder of that night.

I saw, I heard, I felt and tasted and smelled things utterly alien to my consciousness. He did not touch me; he only looked at me. Yet I apprehended instantly that I stood on the edge of an abyss of horror unimaginable! Whether he led me to the bed or whether I made my own way there I do not know; yet it was on the bed that I found myself in the morning after those memorable hours of the remainder of that night. Did I sleep and dream? Or did I lie in hypnosis and know because Phelan willed me to know all that took place? It was better for my sanity to believe that I dreamed.

And what dreams! What magnificent and yet terror-fraught images wrought by the sub-conscious! And Andrew Phelan was everywhere in those dreams. I saw him in that darkness making his way to a bus station, taking a bus; I saw him in the bus, as if I sat beside him; I saw him alight at ancient, legend-haunted, and shunned Innsmouth, after changing buses at Arkham. I was beside him when he prowled down along that wrecked waterfront with its sinister ruins—and I saw where he paused, before that disguised refinery, and later at that one-time Masonic hall which now bore over its doorway the curious legend: *Esoteric Order of Dagon.* And yet more—I witnessed the begin-

ning of that strange pursuit, when the first of those hideous batrachian men emerged from the shadows along the Manuxet River and took up the trail of Andrew Phelan, the uncanny silent followers after the seeker of evil, until Phelan turned his steps away from Innsmouth. . . .

All night long, hour after hour, until the sun rose, and dream and actuality became one, and I opened my eyes to look at Andrew Phelan entering my room. I pulled myself together, smiling sheepishly, and swung to the edge of the bed, where I sat looking at him.

"I think you owe me an explanation," I said.

"It is better not to know too much," he answered.

"One cannot fight evil without knowledge," I retorted.

He said nothing in reply, but I pressed him. He sat down somewhat wearily. Did he not think that some explanation ought to be given me? I demanded. He then countered with an enigmatic suggestion that there were certain age-old horrors which were better left unrevealed; this only excited my curiosity the more. Did it not occur to me, he wanted to know, that there might be certain dislocations in space and time infinitely more terrible than any known horror? Had I never thought that there might be other planes, other dimensions beyond the known planes and dimensions? Had I not considered that space might exist in conterminous folds, that time might be a dimension capable of being travelled backward as well as forward? He spoke to me thus in riddles, and carried on in this fashion despite all my attempts to question him.

"I am only trying to protect you, Keane," he said finally, still with infinite patience.

"Did you escape your pursuer in Innsmouth last night?"

He nodded.

"You knew of him, then?"

"Yes, or you would not have been aware of him, for in your—shall we say, hypnosis?—you could know only such things of which I was cognizant. I suggest to you, Keane, that hypnotism is a dangerous means; I thought it might serve as a warning if it were turned back upon you last night."

"That was not alone hypnotism."

"Perhaps not as you know it." He made a gesture of dismissal. "Would it be possible for me to rest here for a while today before pursuing my quest? I would not like to be discovered by Mrs. Brier."

"I'll see to it that you're not disturbed."

Even as I spoke, I had made up my mind what to do; I was determined that Andrew Phelan would not put me off so easily, and there was one course left open to me—I could discover certain things for myself. Despite his caution, my visitor had dropped hints and suggestions. Even beyond them, however, there was the mystery of Andrew Phelan itself; that had been extensively recorded in the daily papers of that time; certainly in those accounts I might expect to discover some clue. I adjured Phelan to make himself comfortable, and departed, ostensibly for the college; but instead, once outside, I telephoned to excuse myself from that day's study. Then, after a light breakfast, I took myself off to the Widener Library in Cambridge.

Andrew Phelan had said that he had come from Celaeno. This hint was too patent for me to overlook; so forthwith I set myself to track down Celaeno. I found it sooner than I had expected to find it—but it solved nothing. If anything, it served only to deepen the mystery of Andrew Phelan.

For Celaeno was one of the stars in the Pleiades cluster of Taurus!

I turned next to the files of the newspapers concerning Phelan's vanishing, early in September, 1938. I hoped to discover in the accounts of this remarkable disappearance without trace from out the window of that same room to which he had now returned, something to lead me to some feasible explanation. But as I read the accounts, my perplexity deepened; there was a singularly complete puzzlement expressed in the newspapers. But there were certain dark hints, certain vague and ominous suggestions which fastened to my awareness. Phelan had been employed by Dr. Laban Shrewsbury of Arkham. Like Phelan, Dr. Shrewsbury had spent some years in a strange and never-explained absence from his home, to which he had returned as queerly as now Andrew Phelan had come back. Shortly before Phelan's disappearance, Dr. Shrewsbury's house, together with the doctor himself, had been destroyed by fire. Phelan's tasks had apparently been secretarial, but he had spent a good deal of his time in the library of Miskatonic University in Arkham.

So it seemed to me that the only definite clue offered to me at the Widener was in Arkham; for the records of the Miskatonic University Library should certainly reveal what books Phelan had consulted—presumably in the interests of the late Dr. Shrewsbury. Only an hour had now

elapsed; there was ample time for me to pursue my search; so forthwith I took a bus out of Boston for Arkham, and, in a comparatively short time, I was put down not far from the institution within the walls of which I believed I would discover some further information about Andrew Phelan's pursuits.

My inquiry about the records of books used by Andrew Phelan was met with a curious kind of reticence, and resulted in my being shown ultimately into the office of the director of the library, Dr. Llanfer, who wished to know why I sought to consult certain books always kept under lock and key by the express order of the library's directors. I explained that I had become interested in the disappearance of Andrew Phelan, and in the work he had been doing.

His eyes narrowed. "Are you a reporter?"

"I am a student, sir." Fortunately, I had with me my college credentials, and lost no time in showing them to him.

"Very well." He nodded and, however reluctantly, wrote out the desired permission on a slip of paper and handed it to me. "It is only fair to tell you, Mr. Keane, that of the several people who have consulted these books at length, few—if any—are alive to tell about it."

On this singularly sinister note I was shown out of his office, and presently found myself being conveyed to a little room that was hardly more than a cubicle, where I sat down while the attendant assigned to me placed before me certain books and papers. Chief among them, and obviously the most prized possession of the library, judging by the almost reverent way in which the attendant handled it, was an ancient volume entitled simply *Necronomicon,* by an Arab, Abdul Alhazred. The records showed that Phelan had consulted this volume on several occasions, but, much to my chagrin, it was clear that this volume was not for the uninitiated, for it contained references which for ambiguity were unexcelled. But of one thing I could be certain—the book pertained to evil and horror, to terror and fear of the unknown, to things that walk in the night, and not alone the little night of man, but that vaster, deeper, more mysterious night of the world—the dark side of existence.

I turned from this book in near despair, and found myself looking into a manuscript copy of a book by Professor Shrewsbury: *Cthulhu in the Necronomicon.* And in these pages, quite by accident—for this book, too, consisted

of learned and scholarly paragraphs concerning the lore of the Arab, most of them utterly beyond my comprehension—I came upon a certain reference which imparted to me, in the light of what small experience I had already had, a frightening chill and a feeling of the utmost dread. For, as I scanned the pages with their enigmatic allusions to beings and places utterly alien to me, I found in the midst of a quotation purporting to be from another book entitled the *R'lyeh Text,* the following: *"Great Cthulhu shall rise from R'lyeh, Hastur the Unspeakable shall return from the dark star which is in the Hyades near Aldebaran . . . Nyarlathotep shall howl forever in the darkness where he abideth, Shub-Niggurath shall spawn his thousand young . . ."*

I read—and read again. It was incredible, damnable—but for the second time within twenty-four hours, I had come upon reference to unbelievable spaces, and to stars—to a star in the Hyades, a star in Taurus—and surely it could be none other than Celaeno!

And, as if in mocking answer to the question which loomed so large before me, I turned over this manuscript, and found below it a portfolio labeled in a strong, if spidery hand: *Celaeno Fragments!* I drew it toward me, and found it sealed. At this, the aged attendant, who had been observing me closely, came over.

"It has never been opened," he said.

"Not even by Mr. Phelan?"

He shook his head. "Since it came by Mr. Phelan's hand, with Dr. Shrewsbury's seal on it, we do not believe he had access to it. We do not know."

I looked at my watch. Time was passing now, and I meant to go on to Innsmouth before I completed my day. Reluctantly, and yet with a strange sense of foreboding, I pushed away the manuscripts and books.

"I will come again," I promised. "I want to get to Innsmouth before too much of the day has gone."

The attendant favored me with a curious and reflective gaze. "Yes, it is better to visit Innsmouth by day," he said finally.

I pondered this while the old man gathered up the papers and books. Then I said, "That is surely a curious statement to make, Mr. Peabody. Is there anything wrong with Innsmouth?"

"Ah, do not ask me. *I* have never gone there. I have no desire to go there. There are strange things enough in Arkham, without the need for going on

to Innsmouth. But I have heard things—terrible things, Mr. Keane, such things that it may well be said of them that it is of no account whatever whether or not they are true, but of account only that they are being said. What they do say of the Marshes, who have the refinery there . . ."

"Refinery!" I cried, remembering my dream.

"Yes. It was old Obed Marsh first, old Captain Obed—they said—well, what does it matter? He is gone, and now it is Ahab who is there, Ahab Marsh—his great-grandson—and he is no longer young. But he is not old, either; they do not get very old in Innsmouth."

"What did they say of Obed Marsh?"

"It does not matter to tell it, I suppose. Perhaps it is an old wives' tale—that he was leagued with the devil and brought a great plague to Innsmouth in 1846, and that those who came after him were bound by compacts with unearthly beings from beyond that Devil Reef off Innsmouth Harbor, and brought about the destruction by dynamite of many old houses and the wharves along the seashore there during the winter of 'twenty-seven and 'eight. There are not many living there, and no one likes the Innsmouth people."

"Race prejudice?"

"It is something about them—they do not seem like people—that is, people like the rest of us. I saw one of them once—he made me think—you may think it an old man's aberration, but I assure you it is not; he made me think of a frog!"

I was shaken. The creature who had so shadowily crept after Andrew Phelan in my dream or vision of the night before had seemed bestially froglike. I was at the same time possessed of the urgent desire to go to Innsmouth and see for myself the places of my dream-haunted repose.

Yet when I stood before Hammond's Drug Store in Market Square, waiting for the ancient and shunned bus which carried venturesome travellers to Innsmouth and went on to Newburyport, I had a sense of impending danger so strong that I could not shake it off. Despite my insistent curiosity, I was sharply, keenly aware of a kind of sixth sense prompting me not to take the bus driven by that queer, sullen-visaged fellow, who brought the bus to a stop and came out to walk briefly, suggestively stooped, into Hammond's before setting forth on the journey to Innsmouth, the final object of my somewhat aimless search that day.

I did not yield to that prompting, but climbed into the bus, which I shared with but one other passenger, whom I knew instinctively to be an Innsmouth resident, for he, too, had a strange cast of features, with odd, deep creases in the sides of his neck, a narrow-headed fellow who could not have been more than forty, with the bulging, watery blue eyes and flat nose and curiously undeveloped ears which I was to find so shockingly common in that shunned seaport town toward which the bus soon began to roll. The driver, too, was manifestly an Innsmouth man, and I began to understand what Mr. Peabody had meant when he spoke of the Innsmouth people as seeming somehow "not like people." To the end of comparison with that following figure of my dream, I scrutinized both my fellow-passenger and the driver as closely, if furtively, as I could; and I was somewhat relieved to come to the conclusion that there was a subtle difference. I could not put my finger on it, but the follower of my dream seemed malign, in contrast to these people, who had merely that appearance so common to cretins and similar unfortunate individuals bearing the stigmata of lower intelligence in the realm of the sub-normal more especially than that of the abnormal.

I had never before been to Innsmouth. Having come down from New Hampshire to pursue my divinity studies, I had had no occasion to travel beyond Arkham. Therefore, the town as I saw it as the bus approached it down the slope of the coast-line there, had a most depressing effect on me, for it was strangely dense, and yet seemed devoid of life. No cars drove out to pass us coming in, and of the three steeples rising above the chimney-pots and the crouching gambrel roofs and peaked gables, many of them sagging with decay, only one had any semblance whatsoever of use, for the others were weatherbeaten, with gaps in them where shingles had been torn away, and badly needed paint. For that matter, the entire town seemed to need paint—all, that is, save two buildings we passed, the two buildings of my dream, the refinery and that imposing pillared hall standing among the churches which clustered about the radial point of the town's streets, with its black and gold sign on the pediment, so vividly remembered from my experience of the previous night—the *Esoteric Order of Dagon.* This structure, like that of the Marsh Refining Company along the Manuxet River, seemed to have been given a coat of paint only recently. Apart from this, and a single store of the First National chain, all the buildings in what was appar-

ently the business district of the town were repellantly old, with paint peeling from them, and their windows badly in need of washing. It was so, too, of the town generally, though the old residential streets of Broad, Washington, Lafayette, and Adams, where lived still those who were left of Innsmouth's old families—the Marshes, the Gilmans, the Eliots, and the Waites—were of a fresher appearance, not so much in obvious need of paint as of refurbishing, for the grounds grew wild and rank, and in many cases, fences—now overgrown with vines—had been constructed to make the casual view of passersby difficult.

Repelled as I was by the Innsmouth people, I stood for a few moments on the curb, after having left the bus and ascertained the hour when it would return to Arkham—at seven that evening—wondering just what course it would be best to follow. I had no desire to speak to the people of Innsmouth, for I had the strongest of forebodings that to do so was to court subtle and insidious danger; yet I continued to be impelled by the curiosity which had brought me here. It occurred to me, as I stood pondering, that the manager of the First National chain store might very well not be one of the Innsmouth people; it was the custom of the chain to move its managers around, and there was just a chance that the man in charge of this store was an outsider—for among these people, it was inevitable that anyone from beyond the immediate vicinity would be made to feel tangibly that he was an outsider. Accordingly, I made my way over to the corner where the store stood, and entered it.

Contrary to my expectations, there were no clerks, but only a man of middle age, who was at work on a prosaic display of canned goods as I entered and asked for the manager. But clearly, he was the manager; he did not bear any of those oddly shocking distinguishing marks so common to the people of Innsmouth; so he was, as I had guessed, an outsider. I observed with a faint sense of unpleasant distaste that he was startled to look at me, and seemed hesitant to speak, but I realized immediately that this was no doubt due to his isolation among these curiously decayed people.

Having introduced myself, and observed aloud that I could recognize him for an outsider, like myself, I at once pursued my inquiry. What was it about these Innsmouth people? I wanted to know. What was the *Esoteric Order of Dagon?* And what was being said about Ahab Marsh?

His reaction was instantaneous. Nor was it entirely unexpected. He became agitated, he glanced fearfully toward the entrance to the store, and then came over to seize me almost roughly by the arm.

"We don't talk about such things here," he said in a harsh whisper.

His nervous fear was only too manifest.

"I'm sorry if I distressed you," I went on, "but I'm only a casual traveller and I'm curious as to why such a potentially fine port should be all but abandoned. Indeed, it is virtually abandoned; the wharves have not been repaired, and many business places seem closed."

He shuddered. "Do *they* know you are asking questions?"

"You are the first person to whom I have spoken."

"Thank God! Take my advice and leave town as soon as you can. You can take a bus . . ."

"I came in on the bus. I want to know something about the town."

He looked at me indecisively, glanced once more toward the entrance, and then, turning abruptly and walking along a counter toward a curtained door which apparently shut off his own quarters, he said, "Come along with me, Mr. Keane."

In his own rooms at the rear of the store, he began, however reluctantly, to talk in harsh whispers, as if he feared the very walls might hear. What I wanted to know, he said, was impossible to tell, because there was no *proof* of it. All was talk, talk and the terrible decay of isolated families, intermarrying generation after generation. That accounted in part for what he called "the Innsmouth look." It was true, old Captain Obed Marsh held commerce with the far corners of the earth, and he brought strange things—and some said, strange practices like that seafarers' kind of pagan worship called the *Esoteric Order of Dagon*—back to Innsmouth with him. It was said that he held stranger commerce with creatures that rose in the dark of the moon out of the deep sea beyond Devil Reef and met him at the reef, a mile and a half out from shore, but he knew of no one who had seen them, though it was said that in the winter of the year when the Federal Government had destroyed the waterfront buildings, a submarine had gone out and discharged torpedoes *straight down* into the unfathomable depths beyond Devil Reef. He spoke persuasively and well; perhaps indeed he knew no more, but I felt undeniably the lacunae in his story—the unanswered questions being inherent in all that he said.

There were stories about Captain Obed Marsh, yes. Because of them, there were stories about all the Marshes. But there were stories about the Waites, the Gilmans, the Ornes, and the Eliots, too—about all the old, one-time wealthy families. And it was true that it was not wise to linger in the vicinity of the Marsh Refining Company building, or near the Order of Dagon Hall. . . .

At this point our conversation was interrupted by the tinkling of the bell announcing a customer, and Mr. Hendreson immediately left to answer the summons. I peered curiously from between the folds of the curtain and saw that a woman had come in—an Innsmouth woman, for her appearance was instantly chilling and repulsive; there was something more than just similarity to the men about her, there was a kind of almost reptilian menace, and she spoke in a thick mutation of speech, though Hendreson seemed to understand it all right and waited on her without comment of any kind, save to answer her questions with an air that was rather more than just civil, rather subservient.

"That was one of the Waite women," he said in answer to my question when he returned. "They're all like that—and the Marsh women were before them. The Marshes are all gone now, all except Ahab and the two old women."

"The Refinery still runs, then?"

"A little. The Marshes still have some ships; there was a long time after the government was here when they had nothing at all in the way of ships; then in the middle thirties they bought a few again, this Ahab came up from nobody knows where, just came in on a ship one night, they say, and took over where the Marshes left off. Cousin or great-grandson, they say. Saw him once, and that at a distance. Doesn't go out much—except to the hall—the Marshes always did sort of run that show."

The *Esoteric Order of Dagon,* he explained in response to my insistent prying, was a kind of ancient worship, pagan certainly, and outsiders were rigidly excluded from any knowledge of it. It was not healthy even to ask about it. My schooling rebelled at this, and I demanded to know what part the ministers of the other churches were playing in this. To this he responded with a further question: why not ask denominational headquarters for this district? I would discover that the various denominations disowned their own churches, and the pastors of those churches had sometimes sim-

ply disappeared, and at other times had undergone strange reversions to primitive and pagan ceremonies in their worship.

Everything he said was disturbing far beyond anything within the limits of my experience. And yet, what he said was not nearly so terrifying as what remained only implied in his words—the vague hints of terrifying evil, of evil from *outside,* the hideous suggestiveness of what had taken place between the Marshes and those creatures from the deep, the lurking unvoiced assumption of what went on at the meetings of the *Esoteric Order of Dagon.* Something had happened here in 1928, something terrible enough to be kept out of the press, something to bring the Federal Government down to the scene and to justify the havoc wrought along the ocean's edge in the wharf district of this old fishing town. I knew enough Biblical history to know that Dagon was the ancient fish-like god of the Philistines, who rose from the waters of the Red Sea, but there was ever present in my thoughts the belief that the Dagon of Innsmouth was but a fictive mask of that earlier pagan god, that the Dagon of Innsmouth was the symbol of something noxious and infinitely terrible, something that might account not only for the curious aspect of the Innsmouth people, but also for the fact that Innsmouth was shunned and forsaken, let alone by the rest of the towns in its vicinity, and forgotten by the outside world.

I pressed the storekeeper for something definite, but he could not or would not give it; indeed, he began to act, as time wore on, as if I had already been told far too much, his agitation increased, and presently I thought it best to take my leave, though Hendreson implored me not to carry on any overt investigation, saying at the last that people had been known to "drop out of sight, and the Lord alone knows where. Nobody ever found a clue as to where they went, and I reckon nobody ever will. But *they* know."

On this sinister note I took my leave.

Time did not permit much further exploration, but I managed to walk about a few of the streets and lanes of Innsmouth near the bus station, and found everything in a state of curious decay, and most of the buildings giving off besides that familiar odor of old wood and stone, a strange watery essence as of the sea. Farther I could not go, for I was disturbed by the queer glances given me by the few inhabitants I passed on the streets, and I was ever conscious of being under surveillance from behind closed doors and window curtains; but most of all, I was horribly aware of a kind of aura of

malevolence, so keenly aware of it indeed that I was glad when at last the time came for me to take the bus and make my way back to Arkham and thence to my room in Boston.

3

ANDREW PHELAN WAS WAITING for me when I returned.

The night was almost half gone, but Phelan had not left my room. I thought he looked at me a little pityingly when I entered.

"I have often wondered why it is that human curiosity is insatiable," he said, "but I suppose it is too much to expect that one who has had an experience like yours, so far from the norm of things as most of us know it, should accept it without seeking explanation other than that I gave you."

"You know?"

"Where you have been? Yes. Did anyone follow you, Abel?"

"I didn't look to see."

He shook his head mutely. "And did you learn what you sought to learn?"

I confessed that I was more puzzled than ever. And, yes, a little more disturbed than I had been at first. "Celaeno," I said. "What have you been telling me?"

"We were both there," he said bluntly, "Dr. Shrewsbury and I."

For a moment I thought he was resorting to bluff; but there was something in his attitude that forbade levity. He was grim, unsmiling.

"You think that is impossible? You are bound by your own laws. Do not think further of it, but simply accept what I say for the time being. For years Dr. Shrewsbury and I have been on the trail of a great evil being, determined to close the avenues by which he may return to terrestrial life out of his enchanted prison beneath the sea. Listen to me, Abel, and understand in what deadly peril you stood this afternoon in accursed Innsmouth."

Thereupon he launched into a soul-shaking account of incredible, ancient evil, of Great Old Ones akin to the elemental forces—the Fire-Being, Cthugha; the Water-Being, Cthulhu; the Lords of Air—Lloigor, Hastur the Unspeakable, Zhar, and Ithaqua; the Earth Creature, Nyarlathotep, and others—long ago cast out and imprisoned by the spells of the Elder Gods, who exist near the star Betelgeuse—the Great Old Ones who have their minions,

their secret followers among men and beasts, whose task it is to prepare the way for their second coming, for it is their evil intention to come again and rule the universe as once they did after their breaking away and escape from the domain of the Ancient Ones. What he told me then evoked frightening parallels to what I had read in those forbidden books at the library of Miskatonic University only that afternoon, and he spoke in a voice of such conviction, and with such assurance, that I found myself shaken free from the orthodox learning to which I had been accustomed.

The human mind, faced with something utterly beyond its ken, inevitably reacts in one of two ways—its initial impulse is to reject in toto, its secondary to accept tentatively; but in the dread unfolding of Andrew Phelan's explanation there was the damnable, inescapable fact that only such an explanation would fit *all* the events which had taken place since his strange appearance in my room. Of the abominable tapestry of explanation which Phelan wove, several aspects were most striking, and at the same time most incredible. Dr. Shrewsbury and he, Phelan said, had been in search of the "openings" by means of which Great Cthulhu might rise from where he lies sleeping "in his house at R'lyeh," an undersea place, Cthulhu apparently being amphibious; under the protection of an ancient, enchanted five-pointed carven grey stone from ancient Mnar, they need not fear the minions who served the Great Old Ones—the Deep Ones, the Shoggoths, the Tcho-Tcho people, the Dholes and the Voormis, the Valusians and all similar creatures—but their activities had finally aroused the superior beings directly serving Great Cthulhu, against whom the five-pointed star is powerless; therefore, Dr. Shrewsbury and he had taken flight by summoning from interstellar spaces strange bat-like creatures, the servants of Hastur, Him Who Is Not To Be Named, ancient rival of Cthulhu, and, after having partaken of a golden mead which rendered them insensible to the effects of time and space and enabled them to travel in these dimensions, while at the same time heightening their sensory perceptions to an unheard-of extent, they set out for Celaeno, where they had resumed their studies in the library of monolithic stones with books and hieroglyphs stolen from the Elder Gods by the Great Old Ones at, and subsequent to, the time of the revolt from the benign authority of those Gods. Nevertheless, though on Celaeno, they were not unaware of what took place on earth, and they had learned that commerce was again being carried on between the Deep Ones and the

strange people of haunted Innsmouth—and one of those people at least was a leader in preparing the way for the return of Cthulhu. To forestall that one, Dr. Shrewsbury had sent him, Andrew Phelan, back to earth.

"What was the commerce between the Innsmouth people and the creatures who came up out of the sea to Devil Reef?"

"Surely that should have been obvious to you in Innsmouth?"

"That storekeeper said it was too much intermarriage."

Phelan smiled grimly. "Yes—but not among those old families of Innsmouth; it was with those evil beings from the deep, from Y'ha-nthlei below Devil Reef. And the *Esoteric Order of Dagon* is but a deceptive name for their organization of worshippers to do the bidding of Cthulhu and his servants to prepare the way, to open the gate into this upper world for their hellish dominion!"

I pondered this shocking revelation for a full minute before I offered anything more. Accepting everything Phelan had said—and his attitude seemed to say that it made no difference to him whether or not I believed him—it would appear that, as soon as his mission had been accomplished, Phelan himself planned to return to Celaeno. I put that to him. Yes, he admitted, it was so.

"Then you already know who it is in Innsmouth who is leading the people back once more to the worship of Cthulhu and the traffic with the Deep Ones?"

"Let us say rather that I suspect; it is the evident one."

"Ahab Marsh."

"Ahab Marsh, yes. It was his great-grandfather, Obed, who began it, Obed with his wide travels and the strange places he visited. Obed, we know now, encountered the Deep Ones on an island in the mid-Pacific—an island where no island should have been—and he opened the way for them to come to Innsmouth. The Marshes grew wealthy, but they were no more immune to that accursed physiological change than the others in that shunned and unholy settlement. The taint is in the blood now; it has been there for generations. The events of 1928–1929 when the Federal Government invaded Innsmouth put a stop to it for only a few years, less than a decade. With the coming of Ahab Marsh—and none knows whence he came, though the two old Marsh women who were left accepted him as their own—the thing began once more, and this time less overtly, so that this time there will be no

calling out to the Federals. I have come out of the sky to watch and prevent horror from being spawned again on this earth. I cannot fail; I must succeed."

"But how?"

"Events will show. Tomorrow I am going to Innsmouth where I will continue to watch until I can take action."

"The storekeeper told me that all outsiders are watched and regarded with suspicion."

"But I will go in their guise."

All that night I lay sleepless beside Andrew Phelan, torn by the desire to accompany him. If his story were the figment of his imagination, surely it was a glorious and wondrous tale, calculated to stir the pulse and fire the mind; if it were not, then with equal certainty, it was as much my responsibility as it was his to lay hands upon and destroy the evil at Innsmouth, for evil is the ancient enemy of all good, whether as we who are Christians understand it or whether as it is understood in some prehistoric mythos. My studies in divinity seemed suddenly almost frivolous in contrast to what Phelan had narrated, though I confess that at that time I still entertained doubts of some magnitude, for how could I do else? Were not the monstrous entities of evil Phelan conjured up well-nigh impossible to conceive, to say nothing of expecting belief in them? Indeed they were. Yet it is man's spiritual burden that he finds it so easy to doubt, always to doubt, and so difficult to believe even in the simplest things. And the striking parallel which forced itself upon me, a divinity student, a parallel which could not be overlooked, was plain—the similarity between the tale of the revolt of the Great Old Ones against the Elder Gods, and that other, more universally known tale of the revolt of Satan against the forces of the Lord.

In the morning I told Phelan of my decision.

He shook his head. "It is good of you to want to help, Abel. But you have no real understanding of what it means. I've given you only a spare outline—nothing more. I would not be justified in involving you."

"The responsibility is mine."

"No, the responsibility is always that of the man who knows the facts. There is far more even than Dr. Shrewsbury and I already know to be

learned. Indeed, I may say that we ourselves have hardly penetrated the perimeter of the whole—think, then, of how little you know!"

"I conceive it as a duty."

He gazed at me musingly, and I saw for the first time that his eyes were far older than his thirty years. "Let me see, you're twenty-seven now, Abel. Do you realize that if you persist in this decision, you may not have a future?"

I set out patiently to argue with him; I had already dedicated my life to the pursuit and destruction of evil, and this evil he offered me in his company was something more tangible than the evil that lurks in men's souls—he smiled and shook his head at this—and so we spent words back and forth. In the end he consented, though with a kind of cynicism I found galling.

The first step in our pursuit of the evil at Innsmouth was to shift our lodgings from Boston to Arkham, not only because of the proximity of Arkham to Innsmouth, but also because of the elimination of the risk of Phelan's being seen and recognized by my landlady, who would certainly focus highly undesirable publicity on him. And such publicity, in turn, would result in knowledge of his presence terrestrially once again being communicated to those creatures who had previously set out after Dr. Shrewsbury and Andrew Phelan and so forced their flight. No doubt the chase would begin again, in any case, but hopefully not before Phelan had accomplished what he had come back to do.

We moved that night.

Phelan did not think it wise of me to relinquish my Boston room, however; so I took a lease on it for a month—never dreaming how soon I would return to those familiar walls.

In Arkham we found a room in a comparatively new house on Curwen Street. Phelan later confided that the house stood on the site of Dr. Shrewsbury's home, which had been destroyed by fire coincident with his final disappearance. Having settled ourselves and carefully explained to our new landlady that we might be absent from our room for many hours at a time, we proceeded to assemble those properties which would be necessary for us to take up a temporary residence among the Innsmouth people—for Phelan deemed it not only wise but mandatory that, in order to remain in Inns-

mouth comparatively free of observation, we must be made up to look as much like the Innsmouthers as possible.

In the late afternoon of that day, Phelan set to work. I discovered in a very short time that he was a consummate artist with his hands; my features began to change utterly—from a rather innocuous-looking, and perhaps even weak-appearing young fellow, I aged skillfully and began to assume the typical narrow head, flat nose, and curious ears so common to the Innsmouth people. He worked over my entire face; my mouth thickened, my skin became coarse-pored, my color vanished behind a grey pallor, horrible to contemplate; and he managed even to convey a bulging and batrachian expression about my eyes and to give my neck that oddly repellant appearance of having deep, almost scaly creases! I would not have known myself, after he had finished, but the operation took better than three hours, and at the end of that time it was as permanent as it could be expected to be.

"It is right," he decided after he had examined me, and then, tirelessly, without a word, he set about to give himself a similar appearance.

Early the next morning we left the house for Innsmouth, entraining for Newburyport, and thus coming into Innsmouth on the bus from the other side, a deliberate maneuver on Phelan's part. By noon of that day we were established, amid a few interested and curiously searching glances from the slovenly workers in the place, in the Gilman House, Innsmouth's lone open hotel—or rather, in what was left of it, for, like so many buildings in the town, it was in a very bad state of decay. We registered as Amos and John Wilken, cousins, for Phelan had discovered that Wilken was an old Innsmouth name not at present represented by any member of the family living in that accursed seaport city. The elderly clerk in the Gilman House had given us a few sharp-eyed glances, and his bulging eyes stared at the names on his register. "Related to old Jed Wilken, be ye?" he asked. My companion nodded briskly. "Man can see ye belong here," the clerk said, with an almost obscene chuckle. "Got business?"

"We're taking a little vacation," answered Phelan.

"Come to the right place, then, ye did. Things to see here, all right, *if ye're the right kind.*"

Again that distastefully suggestive chuckle.

Once alone in our room, Phelan became more tense than ever. "We've

done well so far, but this is only the beginning. We have a good deal of work to do. I have no doubt the clerk will pass the word around that we are relatives of Jed Wilken; that will satisfy the first questions of the curious. Moreover, our appearance as 'tainted,' like the rest of the Innsmouthers, in the vicinity of those places where we might expect to encounter Ahab Marsh will not excite undue comment—but I am convinced that we must avoid being seen too closely by Ahab himself."

"But what good will it do us to watch Ahab?" I countered. "If you are already reasonably certain that it is he . . ."

"There is more to be learned about Ahab than you think, Abel. Perhaps more than I think. We know the Marsh family, we know the line, Dr. Shrewsbury and I. But nowhere in that family tree can we find any trace of a Marsh named Ahab."

"Yet he is here."

"Yes, indeed. But how came he here?"

We went out soon after, having taken care to keep to old clothes, similar to those we had worn on our arrival, so that we might not give off an impression of undue affluence and so attract unwelcome attention. Phelan set out immediately for the vicinity of the waterfront, detouring only once to examine the Order of Dagon Hall at New Church Green, and ending up at last not far from the Marsh Refining Company. It was there, not long after our arrival, that I first had sight of our quarry.

Ahab Marsh was tall, though he walked in an odd, stooped manner; and his gait, too, was very strange, being not at all regular and rhythmic, but rather jerky, and even for the short distance from the Refinery to the closely curtained car in which he rode, the fashion in which he made progress was very evident; his was a gait that might have been called *inhuman,* for it was not so much a walk as a kind of shuffling or lurching forward, and it was movement which had little counterpart even among the other Innsmouthers, for, whatever the changes in their aspects, their walk, shuffling as it was, was essentially human locomotion. As I have said, Ahab Marsh was taller than most of his fellow citizens, but his face was not much different from the features so common in Innsmouth, save in that it seemed somehow less coarse, and more greasy, as if the skin (for, despite its sometimes ichthyic appearance, it *was* skin) were of a finer texture, this in turn suggesting that the Marsh breed was slightly superior to that of the average Innsmouther. It was im-

possible to see his eyes, for they were concealed by spectacles of a deep cobalt hue, and his mouth, while in many ways similar to that of the natives, was yet different in that it seemed to protrude more, doubtless because Ahab Marsh's chin receded almost into nothingness. He was, literally, a man without a chin, at sight of which I experienced a shudder of horror unlike any I had before undergone, for it gave him an appearance so frighteningly ichthyic that I could not but be repelled by it. He seemed also to be earless, and wore his hat low on what appeared to be a head devoid of hair; his neck was scrawny and, though he was otherwise almost impeccably dressed, his hands were encased in black gloves, or rather, *mittens,* as I saw at second glance.

We were not observed. I had gazed at our quarry only in the most apparently casual manner, while Phelan did not look directly at him at all, but utilized a small pocket mirror to examine him even more indirectly. In a few moments Ahab Marsh had vanished into his car and driven away.

"A hot day for gloves," was all that Phelan said.

"I thought so."

"I fear it is as I suspected," Phelan added then, but this he would not explain. "We shall see."

We repaired to another section of the city to wander through Innsmouth's narrow, shaded streets and lanes, away from the region of the Manuxet River and the falls, close to which the Marsh Refinery rose on a little bluff. Phelan walked in deep and troubled contemplation; it was evident that he was in puzzled thought, which I did not interrupt. I marvelled at the incredible state of arrested decay so prevalent in this old seaport town, and even more at the curious lack of activity; it was as if by far the majority of the inhabitants rested during the day, for very few of them were to be seen on the streets.

The night in Innsmouth, however, was destined to be different.

As darkness came, we made our way to the Order of Dagon Hall. At his one previous visit, Phelan had discovered that entrance to the hall for the ceremonies could be had only by display of a curious fish-like seal, and during the time I had tried to trace his movements here, he had fashioned several of them, of which the most perfect he had reserved for his own use, and that most closely resembling it he held for me, if I cared to use it, though he preferred that I take no such risk and remain outside the hall.

This, however, I was unwilling to do. It was patent that a great many

people were coming to the hall, all evidently members of the *Esoteric Order of Dagon,* and I had the conviction that events I might not wish to miss might take place—this despite Phelan's insistent warning that we were placing ourselves in extreme danger by attending one of the forbidden ceremonies. Nothing daunted, I went doggedly along.

Fortunately, our seals were not challenged; I shudder to imagine what might have happened if they had been. I believe that more than anything else, our having the Innsmouth look, so skillfully fabricated, accounted for our easy passage into the hall. We were the focus of obvious attention, but it was plain that word of our identity as members of the Wilken clan had got around, for there was neither maleficence nor challenge in the eyes of men and women who looked on occasion in our direction. We took seats near the door, meaning to be off immediately if it seemed wise to leave and, having settled ourselves, looked around the room. The hall was large and murky; its windows were shut off by black screens, apparently of tar-paper, so that it had the appearance of an old-fashioned theatre—that is, a hall converted to the showing of moving pictures when that great industry was in its infancy. Moreover, there was a brooding dusk in the room that seemed to rise from the vicinity of a small dais up front. But it was not the murkiness of the hall that seized hold of my imagination—it was the ornaments.

For the hall was decorated with strange stone carvings of fish-like beings. I recognized several of them as very similar to certain primitive sculptures which had come out of Ponape, and certain others bore a disturbing resemblance to inexplicable carvings found on Easter Island, as well as in the Mayan ruins of Central America, and the Inca remains of Peru. Even in this murky light it was clearly to be seen that these sculptures and carvings were not done by Innsmouth hands, but that they were evidently from some foreign port; indeed, they might well have come from Ponape, since the Marsh boats crossed the seas as far as the most distant corners of civilization. Only a very dim artificial light burned, at the foot of the stage; nothing else helped to illumine the hall, yet it seemed to me that the sculptures and basreliefs had a hellish suggestiveness that was soul-stirring and frightening, an out-of-this-world look which was profoundly agitating—for it spoke of time long gone by, of great ages before our time, ages when the world and perhaps the universe were young. Apart from these, and from a miniature of what must have been a vast, amorphous octopus-like creature, which occu-

pied the center of the dais, the hall was bare of everything in the way of decorations—nothing but rickety chairs, a plain table on the dais, and those tightly curtained windows to offset the effect of those alien bas-reliefs and sculptures, and this lack of everything only served to heighten their hideousness.

I glanced at my companion but found him gazing expressionlessly straight before him. If he had examined the bas-reliefs and sculptures, he had done so less openly. I felt that it would not be wise any longer to stare at those oddly disturbing ornaments; so I followed Phelan's example. It was still possible, however, to notice that the hall was rapidly filling up with more people than the events of the day would have persuaded me to believe still lived in the city. There were close to four hundred seats, and soon all were filled. When it became evident that there were still others to be seated, Phelan left his seat and stood up against the wall near the entrance. I did likewise, so that a pair of decrepit oldsters, hideously changed in appearance from the younger element—for the creases at their necks had grown more scaly, and were deeper, and their eyes bulged glassily—could sit down. Our relinquishment of our seats passed unnoticed, for a few others were already standing along the walls.

It must have been close to half past nine—for the summer evening was long, and darkness did not fall early—before anything took place. Then suddenly there appeared through a rear entrance a middle-aged man clad in strangely decorated vestments; at first glance his appearance was priestly, but it was soon manifest that his vestments were blasphemously decorated, with the same batrachian and fish-like representations which in plaque and sculpture ornamented the hall. He came to the image on the dais, touched it reverently with his hands, and began to speak—not Latin or Greek, as I had at first supposed he might speak, but an odd, garbled language of which I could not understand a word, a horribly suggestive series of mouthings which immediately started a kind of low, almost lyrical humming response from the audience.

At this point Phelan touched my arm, and slipped away out the entrance. I was meant to follow, and did so, despite my reluctance to leave the ceremonies just as they were beginning.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Ahab Marsh is not there."

"He may still come."

Phelan shook his head. "I think not. We must look for him elsewhere."

He walked with such purpose that I assumed, correctly, as it turned out, that he knew or suspected where he might find Ahab Marsh. I had thought that Phelan would go directly to the old Marsh home on Washington Street, but he did not; my second guess was that he would lead the way back to the Refinery, and in this I was certain that I was correct, until we reached the Refinery, crossed the bridge over the Manuxet nearby, and went on to strike out along the seashore beyond the harbor at the mouth of the river. The night was dark, save for a waning late-rising moon, pushing up out of the eastern horizon, and making its glade yellowly on the water, if feebly; stars shone above, a bank of dark clouds lay low along the southern rim of heaven, a light east wind blew.

"Do you know where you're going, Phelan?" I asked finally.

"Yes."

We were following a little-used road which had been marked "Private," and which led crazily along the coast there, over stones and sand, rocks and ruts. In one place Phelan dropped to his knees and lightly touched the sandy ruts.

"This road has been recently used."

The sand was freshly disturbed, unlike the caked sand all around. "By Ahab?" I asked.

He nodded thoughtfully. "There is a little cove just ahead. This is Marsh land—old Obed bought it more than a century ago."

We hastened on, though we instinctively walked with more caution.

On the shore of the sheltered cove we found the curtained car in which Ahab Marsh had that day left the Refinery. Unafraid, perhaps because of what he knew he would find there, my companion went directly up to it. There was no one in the car, but on the back seat, thrown carelessly down, were clothes—a man's clothes—and even in the dark I recognized the suit Ahab Marsh had worn that day.

But Phelan closed the car door and hurried around to the other side, past the car down to the sea's edge, where he dropped to his knees once more and looked down. The shoes were there, I saw when I knelt at my companion's side. The socks, too—thick, woollen socks, though the day had been very warm. And the shape of the shoes in that wan moonlight was strangely

upsetting—how wide they were! how curiously shaped!—at one time surely, normal shoes, if a little large, but now plainly *worn* out of shape, as if the foot inside had been—well, as if a kind of distorting disease had afflicted the wearer's feet.

And there was something else, something all the more hideously frightening in that yellow moonlight, with the sea's sound and that other sound—the sound to which Phelan cautioned me to listen: a kind of distant ululation, non-human in origin, coming not from the land at all, but from the sea, far far out, the sea—and Devil Reef, haunted in the channels of my memory by everything I had heard from that storekeeper and later on from my companion, the stories of strange, evil, unholy traffic between sea-creatures and the people of Innsmouth, the things Obed Marsh had found on Ponape and that other island, the terror of the late nineteen-twenties with the strange disappearances of young people, human sacrifices put to sea and never returned! It rose in the east and came in on the wind, a ghastly chanting that sounded like something from another world, a liquid ululation, a watery sound defying description, but evil beyond any experience of man. And it rode the wind into my horrified consciousness while my eyes were fixed still to that terrible evidence so plain on the sandy beach between the place where Ahab Marsh's shoes and socks were, and where the water began—*the footprints, not of human feet, but of pedal extremities that were squat, with elongated digits, thick, wide, and webbed!*

4

OF THE EVENTS THAT came after, I hesitate to write, and yet from the moment Andrew Phelan knew, there was no need for further delay. It was Ahab Marsh who was the object of his search—and only to a considerably lesser degree the worshippers in the Order of Dagon Hall. The sacrifices, he said, had been going on again, with greater secrecy, just as in Obed Marsh's day. Ever since the debacle of 1928–1929, the Innsmouthers had been more careful, those who had been left, and those who had filtered back into the town after the Federals had gone. And Ahab—Ahab who had shed his clothing and gone into the sea only to turn up the next day, as if nothing untoward had taken place—could anyone doubt but that he had swum out to Devil Reef? And could anyone doubt what had happened to

the young Innsmouth man who had driven his car that night? For that was the way of sacrifice—the chosen of Ahab, to work for Ahab and be prepared, unknowing, for the sacrifice to those hellish creatures which rose from the depths of Y'ha-nthlei beyond the shunned and feared Devil Reef which in low tide stood black and evilly above the dark waters of the Atlantic.

For Ahab Marsh was back next day, back at the Refinery, with another young man to drive his car around, and take him for those short distances from the immense old Marsh home on tree-shrouded Washington Street to the Refinery building near the falls of the Manuxet. But all night long from our room in the Gilman House we listened. It was not only the sounds from the sea, borne by the east wind, that we heard—there were other things beside that ghastly ululation. There were the terrible screams, the hoarse, animal-like screams of a man in mortal terror; there was that frightful chant which came simultaneously from the assembled members of the *Esoteric Order of Dagon,* gathered together in that hall with its horrible sculptures and bas-reliefs and that grotesque and bestial miniature of a creature evil beyond the concept of man, that horrible mouthing which made its impact weirdly on the night air—*Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn*—ever repeated, a ritual phrase which Phelan translated in his hushed voice as, "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming!"

In the morning my companion went out only long enough to assure himself that Ahab Marsh had returned; then he came back to the hotel and lost himself in study, leaving me to my own devices for the remainder of that day, and adjuring me only to refrain from making myself in any way conspicuous. I had already resolved to do nothing to attract attention, but nevertheless I was determined to follow up the hints of terrible human sacrifices and horrible rites performed by certain of the Innsmouth people, which Andrew Phelan had given me; and, accordingly, I made my way back to the First National store, and Mr. Hendreson.

The storekeeper did not recognize me, which was a tribute to Phelan's skill. He adopted toward me that same servile attitude which he had used to the Waite woman who had entered his store when I was last in it, and when we were alone—for someone else was in the store at my entrance—and I attempted to identify myself, it was almost impossible to do so. Plainly, Hendreson thought at first that one of the Innsmouth people had somehow

learned of our previous conversation, and it was only when I repeated to him many of the things he had said that he acknowledged me for whom I was. But he was fearful still.

"If *they* find out!" he exclaimed in a harsh, ominous whisper.

I assured him no one knew of my real identity and none would, save of course Hendreson, whom I felt certain could be trusted. He guessed that I had been "looking into things," as he put it, and with considerable agitation again urged me to take myself off.

"Some of them seem to be able to *smell* people who are not like them. I don't know how they do it—as if they read a man's mind or his heart. And if they catch you like this—why, why . . ."

"Why what, Mr. Hendreson?"

"You'll never get back to where you came from."

I assured him with a self-confidence I was far from feeling that I had no intention of getting caught. I had come to him now for more information; despite the violent shaking of his head, I would not take his negative answer; perhaps he knew nothing, yet I must ask. Had there been any disappearances—particularly of young men and women—from Innsmouth in the years he had been here?

He nodded furtively.

"Many?"

"Maybe twenty or so. When the Order meets—they don't meet often; it usually comes out after that. On the nights the Order meets, somebody just isn't heard from again. *They* say they've run away. First few times I heard it, I didn't find that hard to believe; I could understand why they'd want to run away from Innsmouth." But then—there were those other things—the people who disappeared usually always worked for Ahab Marsh, and there were those old stories about Obed Marsh—how he carried people out to Devil Reef and came back alone. Zadok Allen had talked about it; *they* said Zadok was crazy, but Zadok said things, and there was certain clinching evidence to support what the crazed old man said. He talked like that, and he had spells, Hendreson said, until he—*died.* By the way he said it, I gathered that Zadok Allen had not just died.

"You mean until they killed him," I countered.

"I didn't say so; I'm not the one to say anything. Mind you, I never *saw* a thing—anyway, nothing you could make something of. I never saw anyone

disappear; I just didn't see them any more, that's all. Later on, I heard about it—somebody dropped a word about it here and there, and I picked it up. Nothing ever got into the paper; nothing ever was said so it could; no one ever made any search or any attempt to get trace of the missing ones. I couldn't help thinking about the stories old Zadok Allen and those others whispered about Captain Obed Marsh. Might be it's all in my mind. It would affect a man's mind to live in a place like this for as many years as I've been here; it would affect some men in just as many months. I'm not the one to say old Zadok Allen was crazy. All I say is that I don't think he was, and he never talked much until he had a little something to drink; that loosened his tongue, and usually next time he was sober he seemed to be mighty sorry he said anything, walking along and looking over his shoulder all the time even in broad daylight, and always a-looking out toward the sea, out to where you can just see the line of Devil Reef when the tide is low and the day is clear. The Innsmouthers don't look out there much, but sometimes when there's a meeting at the Order of Dagon Hall, there are lights out there, strange lights, and there are lights from the cupola of the old Gilman House, just flashing back and forth—as if it was talk going on between 'em."

"You've seen those lights yourself?"

"It's the only thing I've seen. Might be a boat, but I don't think so. Not out there at Devil Reef."

"Have you ever been out there?"

He shook his head. "No, sir. Don't have any wish to go. I got close to it one time in a launch—ugly grey stone, with some mighty strange shapes to it—and I didn't want to get any closer. It was just like something driving you away, like a big hand reaching out invisible and pushing you back—that's the way it was. Made my skin crawl and my hair tingle along the back of my neck. I never forgot it—and that was before I heard much; so I never put it down to what was suggested or hinted at and something getting to work on my nerves or my imagination."

"Ahab Marsh is the power here in Innsmouth then?"

"That he is. That's because there's not a Waite or a Gilman or an Orne left, not a man, that is, just the women, and they're growing old. The men all vanished about the time the Federals came in here."

I turned him back to the subject of those mysterious disappearances. It

seemed incredible that young men and women could simply drop out of existence in this day and age, and never a word of it printed anywhere. Oh, responded Hendreson, I didn't know Innsmouth if I thought that was impossible. They were close-mouthed, close as clams, and if they figured it was something they had to do for their pagan god or whatever it was they worshipped, they never complained, they just took it and made the best of it, and they were all mortally afraid of Ahab Marsh. He came close to me, so close that I was aware of his quickened pulse.

"I touched him once, just once, and that once was enough! God! He was cold, cold as ice, and where I touched him, between the end of his glove and his coat-sleeve—he drew back right away and gave me a look—the skin was moist-cold, like a fish!" He shuddered at the memory of it, touched a handkerchief to his temples, and broke away.

"Aren't they all like that?"

"No, they're not. The others are different. They say the Marshes were all cold-blooded, especially since Captain Obed's time, but I've heard different. You take that fellow—Williamson, I think his name was—who brought the Federals here. They didn't know it at that time, but he was a Marsh—he had Orne blood in him, too, and when *they* found it out, they just waited for him to come back. And he did come. He came back, they said, and he went right down to the water, a-singing, they said, and he took off his clothes and he dove in and began swimming out toward that reef, and never a word of him since. Mind you, I didn't see it myself; it's just what I heard, though it took place in my own time. Those with Marsh blood in 'em always come back, no matter how far away they are. Look at Ahab Marsh—come from God knows where."

Once started, Hendreson proved to be unusually loquacious, despite his fears. Doubtless the long periods of abstinence in his conversation with outsiders had something to do with it, as well as the security his shop afforded him, for it was not often visited in the morning hours; the Innsmouth people preferred to shop in late afternoon, and he was often obliged to keep his store open beyond the usual six o'clock closing hour. He talked of the strange jewelry worn by the Innsmouthers—those grotesque and repulsive armlets and tiaras, the rings and pectorals, with repellant figures cut in high relief on them all. I could not doubt that they were the same as those figures of the bas-reliefs and sculptures in the Order of Dagon Hall;

Hendreson has seen pieces on occasion; those who belonged to the Order wore them, and certain of the debased churches had them, too. He spoke about the sounds from the sea—"a kind of singing, and it's no human voice that does it."

"What is it?"

"I don't know. No inclination to find out, either. It wouldn't be healthy. It comes from somewhere out there—like last night." His voice dropped to a whisper.

"I know what you mean."

He hinted at the other sounds; though he did not once mention the hoarse, terrified screams, he had nonetheless heard them. And there were other things, he muttered darkly, things far more terrible, things that went back to old Obed Marsh and still lived in the waters beyond Devil Reef. There was that suppressed talk about Obed himself—how he was not really dead, how a party of boating people from Newburyport way who knew the Marsh family came into port one day all pale and shaking and said they had seen Obed out there, swimming like a porpoise, and if it was not Obed Marsh, then what was it in his likeness? What was it the Newburyporters had seen? No plain fish would scare men and women like that! And why did the Innsmouthers try so hard to keep it quiet? They shut up the Newburyport people, all right—probably because they were strangers and they didn't really want to believe what it was they saw out there near Devil Reef. But there *were* things swimming out there, others had seen them, things that dove and disappeared and never came up again, though they looked like men and women, except that they were sometimes scaly and with odd, wrinkled, and shiny skin. And what happened to so many of the old folks? There never seemed to be funerals, nor buryings—but certain of them got queerer looking every year, and then one fine day went down to the sea and first thing people knew they were reported "lost at sea" or "drowned" or something like that. It was true, the things swimming in the sea were not often seen by day—but at night! And what was it, what manner of creature was it that came climbing out of the sea onto Devil Reef? And why did certain of the Innsmouthers go out there in the night? He seemed to grow more and more excited as he talked, though his voice grew more hushed, and it was readily patent that he had brooded a great deal about everything he had heard since he came to Innsmouth, and was held to it by a fascination over which he had

no control, a fascination which existed side by side with an utter and almost morbid loathing.

It was almost noon when I made my way back to the Gilman House.

My companion had finished his study, and he now listened to what I had to say with the utmost gravity, though I could detect nothing in his attitude to reveal that he had not previously been aware of what Hendreson had said and hinted. After I finished, he said nothing, only nodded, and went on to explain our coming movements. Our period of stay in Innsmouth was almost over, he said; we would leave the city just as soon as we had dealt with Ahab Marsh, and that might be tonight, it might be tomorrow night, but it would be soon, for all was in readiness. Meanwhile, however, there were certain aspects of this strange pursuit of which I must know, and chief among them was the danger to myself.

"I am not afraid," I hastened to say.

"No, perhaps not in the physical sense. But it is impossible to say what they might do to you. All of us carry a talisman which is potent against the Deep Ones and the minions of the Old Ones, but not against the Old Ones themselves, or their immediate servitors, who also come to the surface of earth on special missions to destroy such of us as learn the secrets and oppose the coming again of Great Cthulhu, and those others."

So saying, he placed before me a small, five-pointed star made of a stone material foreign to me. A grey stone—and instantly I remembered reading of it in the library at Miskatonic University—"the five-pointed star carven of grey stone from ancient Mnar!" which had the power of the Elder Ones in its magic. I took it wordlessly and put it into my pocket, as Phelan indicated I should.

He went on.

This might afford me partial terrestrial protection, but there was a way of further escape if danger from the immediate servitors of Cthulhu menaced. I, too, might come to Celaeno, if I wished, though the way was terrible, and it would be required of me that I enlist the aid of creatures who, while in opposition to the Deep Ones and all others who served Great Cthulhu, were themselves essentially evil, for they served Hastur the Unspeakable, laired in the black Lake of Hali in the Hyades. In order that these creatures be made to serve me, however, it would be necessary for me to swallow a small pellet, a distillation of that marvellous golden mead of Pro-

fessor Shrewsbury's, the mead which rendered the drinker insensible to the effects of time and space, and enabled him to travel in those dimensions, while at the same time heightening his sensory perceptions; then to blow upon a strange stone whistle, and also to call forth into space certain words: *"Iä! Iä! Hastur, Hastur, cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!"* Certain flying creatures—the Byakhee—would come out of space, and I was to mount and take flight unafraid. But only if danger pressed close—for the danger of the Deep Ones and all who are allied to them, insisted Phelan, is as great to the soul as to the body.

To all this I listened in amazement not untouched by a kind of spiritual terror—that terror so common to men who, for the first time look out into the void of greater space, who begin to contemplate seriously for the initial time the vastness of the outer universes—a terror induced by the instinctive knowledge that it was by this means of travel that Andrew Phelan had reached my room in Boston, and it was by this means that he had originally gone forth more than a year ago!

So saying, Phelan gave into my hands the little golden pellets, three of them, in case I should lose one, and also a tiny whistle, which he warned me never to blow upon save in the dire need he had outlined, unless I were prepared for fateful consequences. This much, he said, he could do for my protection, and he made it plain that we would not be returning to Arkham together, though we might set out for that town in each other's company.

"They will expect us to go back to Newburyport," he said. "So we will follow the railroad tracks toward Arkham. That is shorter, in any case, and by the time they may be ready to pursue, we should be well out of their way. Immediately when our work is done, we will make for the railroad; we will wait long enough to be sure that our work here is accomplished." He paused significantly and then added that pursuit from Innsmouth by the people themselves we need not fear.

"What other then?"

"When that other comes, you will know without prior explanation," he answered ominously.

By nightfall, we were prepared. I did not as yet fully know Andrew Phelan's plan, but I knew that the first step necessary would be to empty the Washington Street house of the Marshes of the two women who were there. To

this end Phelan sent them a prosaic note saying that an elderly relative had arrived to put up at the Gilman House, and, being in ill health and unable to call, would enjoy a visit that evening at nine o'clock from the Misses Aliza and Ethlai Marsh. It was a commonplace letter, correct in every detail, save that my companion embellished it with a reproduction of that seal of Dagon, and again impressed the seal in wax upon the flap of the envelope. He had signed the name of Wilken, knowing that there had years ago been marriage between the Marshes and the Wilkens, and he felt certain that this letter would take the Marsh women from the house for the length of time required for what must be done to destroy the leadership of the minions of Cthulhu at Innsmouth and so retard whatever progress had been made in preparing the way for the rising again, the coming from his house of that dread being dreaming deep in the waters under the earth.

He dispatched this letter near supper-time, and instructed the desk clerk that if anyone should telephone, he would be back directly. Then we went out, Phelan carrying a little valise into which he had put some of the things he had brought with him in the pockets of that robe he had worn on his arrival.

The sky was overcast, which my companion was pleased to see, for at nine there would otherwise still have been some twilight; now, however, at that hour, the night would be dark enough for our purpose. If all went as he hoped, the Marsh women would travel to the Gilman House by car, driven by the new man; that would leave Ahab alone in that old mansion. Phelan explained that he had no qualms; if the women did not respond to that message, they too must be destroyed, much as he disliked the thought of proceeding against them in the same fashion as against Ahab. We had no difficulty in finding a place of adequate concealment from which we could watch the Washington Street house, for the street was heavily grown with trees, thus affording shadows and dark corners. The house across the way was shrouded in darkness, save for a tiny light that gleamed in a room on the second floor, but just before nine o'clock, a light went up downstairs.

"They're coming," whispered my companion.

He was right, for in a few moments that black curtained car rolled around to the front entrance, and the two Marsh women, heavily veiled, came from the house and, entering the car, drove away.

Phelan lost not an instant. He crossed the street into the dark grounds

of the Marsh estate, and there at once opened his valise, which contained scores of the five-pointed stars, all very small. These, he said, were to be used to circle the house, particularly in the vicinity of the doors and windows; we must work silently and swiftly, for if these talismans were not laid down, Ahab might escape. But he could not cross these stones, he could not pass by them in any way. I hastened to do Phelan's bidding, and soon met him coming around the other way. The darkness was urgent with foreboding; at any moment the Marsh women might come back; at any second Ahab Marsh might become aware of someone in the grounds, though we made no sound.

"It will soon be over," said Phelan then. "Whatever happens, be still—do not be alarmed."

He then disappeared once more around to the back of the house. He was gone but a few minutes before he returned to where I stood in the shadow of a bush near the front entrance. But he did not pause; he went on up to the front door and there busied himself for a few moments. When he stepped away, I saw a thin flame growing at one corner of the door—he had fired the house!

He joined me, looking grimly and emotionlessly toward that single window where light burned. "Only fire will destroy them," he said. "You might remember that, Abel. You may encounter them again."

"We'd better get away."

"Wait. We must make sure of Ahab."

The fire ate rapidly at the old wood, and already at the rear of the house the flames lit up the close-pressing trees. At any moment someone might see, someone might give the alarm which would summon the rickety old Innsmouth fire department vehicles; but in this we were fortunate, for the Innsmouthers generally shunned the places where Ahab Marsh lived and worked, fearing and respecting the Marshes, even as their ancestors had feared and respected those earlier members of that accursed family who had trafficked with beings out of the sea and so had brought into this seaport town a blight of horrible miscegenation which had left its mark upon all their progeny.

Suddenly the window of that lit room was thrown open, and Ahab leaned out. He was there for but an instant; then he withdrew, not troubling to shut the window, and thus creating an effective draft for the flames from below.

"Now!" whispered Andrew Phelan urgently.

The front door was torn open, and Ahab Marsh bounded out past the flames in one great leap. But he went no farther; he came down, took one step, and then recoiled, his arms upflung, and a horrible, guttural cry welled from his thick lips. Behind him the flames mounted and spread, aided by the draft through the open door; already the heat must have been awful where he stood—for what happened then is seared upon my consciousness for all time.

The clothes worn by Ahab Marsh began to fall from him in flames as he stood there—first those curious mittens on his hands, then the black skull-cap, and the clothes about his body—and this so swiftly that he seemed literally to burst from his clothes! What stood there then was not human, it was not a man, it was a hellish batrachian and ichthyic travesty of a man, whose hands were frog-like and webbed, great pads instead of hands, whose body was scaled and tentacled and gleamed with the moisture so natural to its coldness—a body which had been bound into the unnatural clothing of a human being, but which, now that that clothing had fallen away, and the tight linens binding it to fit into that clothing as well, resembled a thing out of an unknown, dark corner of earth's forbidden places—a terrible, ghastly thing that walked in the guise of a man, but had gills beneath the wax ears which melted off in the heat of that destructive fire where that creature slowly backed into the flames, rather than dare the power of those stones laid end to end around the house, whimpering and crying bestially, in a kind of ululation I had heard before!

Small wonder Ahab Marsh had been able to swim from shore out to Devil Reef! Small wonder he had carried sacrifices to the waiting hosts out there in the depths! For the creature in the guise and identity of Ahab Marsh was not a Marsh at all, he was not a human being; *the thing that called itself Ahab Marsh, the thing the Innsmouth people so blindly followed was one of the Deep Ones itself, come from the sunken city of Y'ha-nthlei to resume again the work once begun by the terrible Obed Marsh at the behest and bidding of the minions of Great Cthulhu!*

As in a dream I felt Andrew Phelan's touch upon my arm; I turned and followed him into the shadowed street, down which even now came that curtained car carrying the Marsh women back to that unhallowed house. We fled, skulking in the shadows. There was no need to return to the Gilman House, for we had left money in our room to pay for our lodgings, and nothing of importance in personal belongings had been left there. We went

directly toward the railroad tracks and made our way out of that justly shunned city.

A mile beyond the town we turned and looked back. The redness of the sky in that place told us what was happening; the fire in that ancient tinder house had spread to neighboring houses. But something of even more portentous significance took place, for silently my companion pointed seaward, and there, far out on the rim of the sky, I saw strange green flashes of light and, looking swiftly back toward Innsmouth, I saw other lights flashing from a high place which could have been none other than the cupola of the Gilman House.

Then Andrew Phelan took my hand. "Goodbye, Abel. I am going to leave you here. You will remember everything I have said."

"But they will find you!" I cried.

He shook his head. "You go on along the tracks; lose no time. I'll be all right."

I did as I was bidden, knowing that every moment's delay was potentially fatal.

I could not have gone far when I heard that strange, unearthly whistling sound, and shortly thereafter the voice of Andrew Phelan shouting triumphantly into space—*"Iä! Iä! Hastur! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!"*

Involuntarily I turned.

There, silhouetted against the red-hued sky over Innsmouth, I saw a great flying thing, a great bat-like bird that came sweeping down and was lost briefly in the darkness—the Byakhee! Then it rose up again, and it was not alone—something more was there between its great wings where it mounted swiftly out of sight.

Daring danger, I ran back.

Of Andrew Phelan there was no sign.

5

IT IS NOW ALMOST A fortnight since the events of that week.

The divinity school has known me no more; I have been haunting the library of Miskatonic University, and I have learned more—much more—about things Andrew Phelan would not tell me, and I understand better now

what it was that went on in accursed Innsmouth, things that are going on in other remote corners of this earth, which is always and forever a great battleground for the forces of good and those of evil.

Two nights ago for the first time I saw that I was being followed. Perhaps I was wrong in tearing from my face all those disfiguring things Andrew Phelan had put there to give me "the Innsmouth look," and leaving them lie along the little-used tracks in the direction of Arkham, where they might be found. Perhaps it was not the Innsmouth people who found them—but something other, something that came out of the sea that night in response to those signals from the cupola of the Gilman House. Yet my follower of two nights ago was an Innsmouth man, surely; his oddly batrachian appearance was unmistakable. Of him, however, I had no fear; I had the five-pointed star-stone in my pocket; I felt safe.

But last night came the other!

Last night I heard the earth move under me! I heard the sound of great sluggish, sucking footsteps slogging along in the waters of the earth, and I knew what Andrew Phelan meant when he said that I would know when that other pursuer came! I know!

I have made haste to put this down, and I will send it to the library at Miskatonic University, to be put with Dr. Shrewsbury's papers and what they call the "Phelan Manuscript," written by Andrew Phelan before he went to Celaeno for the first time. It is late, and I have the conviction that I am not alone; there is an unnatural hush about the entire city, and I can hear those horrible sucking sounds from far beneath. In the east, the Pleiades and Celaeno have begun to rise above the horizon. I have taken the little golden pellet made from Dr. Shrewsbury's mead, I have the whistle here beside me, I remember the words, and if the heightening of awareness that is certain to follow the taking of the mead discloses something of what it is that dogs me now, I shall know what to do.

Even now I am becoming aware of changes within me. It is as if the walls of the house fell away, as if the street too, were gone, and a fog—something in that watery fog, like a giant frog with tentacles—like a—

Great God! What horror!

Iä! Iä! Hastur! . . .



BEING THE TESTAMENT OF CLAIBORNE BOYD

(The manuscript of Claiborne Boyd, now in the vaults of the Library of the University of Buenos Aires, is in three parts. The first two parts were discovered among the effects of Claiborne Boyd left behind in a hotel room in Lima, Peru; the final portion is a piecing together of various letters—delivered to Professor Vibberto Andros of Lima—and of related accounts. The entire manuscript has been released for limited publication only after prolonged discussion among its custodians.)

1

IT IS SINGULARLY FORTUNATE that the ability of the human mind to correlate and assimilate facts is limited in relation to the potential knowledge of the universe even as we know it—to say nothing of what lies beyond. Fortunate because the earth's teeming millions, save but for an infinitesimal number, live on blissfully unaware of the dark depths of horror which yawn eternally not only in strange, out-of-the-way places of the earth, but often just beyond the sunset or around the next corner—the

yawning chasms in time and space, and the inconceivably alien things which occupy those terrible lacunae.

Less than a year ago I was engaged upon a leisurely study of Creole culture, residing in New Orleans and making occasional trips from that city into the bayou country of the Mississippi Delta region, which was not far from the town of my birth. I had been following this pursuit for perhaps three months when word reached me of the death of my great-uncle Asaph Gilman, and of the shipment—at his express direction as contained in his will—of certain of his property to me, as "the only student" remaining among his few living relatives.

My great-uncle had been for many years Professor of Nuclear Physics at Harvard, and, following his retirement because of age from that University, he had taught briefly at Miskatonic University in Arkham. From this last post he retired to his home in a suburb of Boston and began to live out his last years in an almost reclusive fashion; I write "almost," because he broke his seclusion from time to time to make strange, secretive trips into all corners of the world, on one of which—while poking about certain unsavory districts of Limehouse, in London—he had met his death—a sudden riot of what appeared to be lascars or dacoits from ships in dock involving him and dissipating as suddenly as it had begun, leaving him dead.

I had had occasional communications from him, written in a spidery hand and dispatched from various points at which he had touched—from Nome, Alaska, for instance, and Ponape in the Carolines, from Singapore, Cairo, Cregoivacar in Transylvania, Vienna, and many more places. At the beginning of my research into Creole backgrounds, I had received a cryptic postcard sent from Paris, bearing on its face a fine etching of the Bibliotheque Nationale, and on the reverse a directive from Great-Uncle Asaph: "If you come upon any evidence of pagan worship *past or present,* in your study, I would be obliged if you would collect all data and send it along to me at your earliest convenience." Since, of course, the Creoles among whom I studied were largely Roman Catholic in religion, I encountered no such data as he sought; so I did not write to the address in London he gave. Indeed, before I had planned to write to him at all, word of his untimely death reached me.

My great-uncle's effects followed notice of his death a fortnight later—two steamer-trunks filled to capacity, if their weight were any indication. At

the time of their arrival I was busy assimilating primary facts about customs and folklore of the Creole country, and for that reason it was well over a month before I thought to open the trunks and make at least a cursory examination of their contents. When I did finally open them, I discovered that their contents could be divided readily into two parts—a collection of extremely curious "pieces" which would have been the delight of any collector of aboriginal art, and a sheaf of notes, some typewritten, some in my great-uncle's spidery script, some merely clippings and letters.

Obviously because the aboriginal art lent itself most readily to scrutiny, I gave some time to it immediately. After perhaps four hours spent in an effort at some arrangement, I came to the conclusion that the pieces my great-uncle had so painstakingly collected represented a strange kind of creative progression. My own knowledge of such aboriginal art was comparatively limited, but my great-uncle had attached adequate notes to the bottoms or backs of most of the pieces, save the patently self-explanatory ones, such as the common types of Polynesian masks, for instance.

The division of the pieces into groups was in itself interesting. There were approximately two hundred and seventy-seven of them, making allowance for two or three which might have broken in such a way as to resemble two pieces rather than one. Of this number, probably a quarter of a hundred were of American Indian origin, and a like number of Canadian Indian and Eskimo origin. There were a few scattered pieces which were clearly of Mayan design, and there were a score of Egyptian craftsmanship. Approximately a hundred pieces came out of the African heartland, and two score or so from Oriental sources. Almost all the remainder—and therefore the majority from any one source—were South Pacific in origin, from Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia, and Australia. Apart from these, there were perhaps half a dozen pieces, the origin of which was admittedly unknown. These pieces were all extremely unusual, and, though differing widely in a superficial fashion from one another, there seemed to be connecting links between them, as if some obscure development had occurred in common in all the racial and culture patterns represented, such links as suggested certain basic similarities between the hideous carvings of the South Pacific and the repellant totems of the Canadian Indians, for instance; and of this odd relationship, my great-uncle had certainly been aware, as his notes indicated. But, disappointingly, there was nowhere any clear indication of the underly-

ing thesis of my great-uncle's research insofar as these curious art works were concerned.

My great-uncle had clearly lavished most of his care upon the South Pacific pieces, which were not, I saw at a glance, the customary mask-varieties, though his notes were not in themselves too expository, and it was only in the light of later events that some clarification of the "art" and of his appended notes occurred to me. Among the South Pacific pieces were several which caught my eye at once. In the order of their impingement upon my awareness, they were as follows, with appended notes:

1) A human figure surmounted by a bird. "Sepik River, New Guinea. Reverse said to exist, but great secrecy attending. Uncollected."

2) A piece of Tapa cloth from the Tonga Islands, the design a dark green star upon a brown background. "First occurrence of the five-pointed star in this area. No other relation. Natives unable to account for design; say it is very old. Evidently no contact here, since it has lost meaning."

3) Fisherman's God. "Cook Islands. *Not* the familiar fishing canoe effigy. Note lack of neck, misshapen torso, tentacles for legs and/or arms. No name given by natives."

4) Stone *tiki.* "Marquesas. Exciting *batrachian* head of figure presumably man. Are fingers webbed? Natives, while not worshipping it, endow it with meaning, apparently fear association."

5) Diminutive head. "Clearly a miniature of colossal stone images found on the outer slope of Rano-raraku. Typical Easter Island work. Found in Ponape. Natives call it simply 'Elder God.'"

6) Carved lintel. "New Zealand Maori. Exquisite workmanship. Central figures obviously octopoid, yet not an octopus, but a curious combination of fish, frog, octopus, and man."

7) Carved door jamb *(talé).* "New Caledonia. Note suggestion of five-pointed star *again!*"

8) Ancestral figure. "Carved in tree fern. Ambrym, New Hebrides. Partly human, partly batrachian. If representation of true ancestor, some manifest relation to same cult as that of Ponape and Innsmouth. Mention of Cthulhu to owner frightened him; he seemed not to know why."

9) Bearded mask. "Ambrym origin. Exciting suggestion of *tentacles, not hair,* as 'beard.' Similar use in Carolines, Sepik River country of New Guinea, and Marquesas. One such in shop in dock area of Singapore. *Not for sale!*"

10) Wooden figure. "Sepik River. Notice a) nose—a single tentacle curling down and into figure below waist; b) lower jaw—another tentacle curling down, rejoining torso at umbilicus. Head grotesquely out of proportion. Living model?"

11) War-shield. "Queensland. Maze design. Apparently a) maze under water; b) squat, anthropoid figure suggested at end of maze. Tentacles?"

12) Shell pendant. "Papua. Similar to above."

It seemed manifest that my great-uncle sought some very definite tendencies in these pieces, but whether of the development of primitive art or of some object of representation was not clear. Presumably, however, it was the latter, for among the remaining pieces of unknown origin there were two which were extremely suggestive in the light of my great-uncle's cryptic notes. One was of a rough, five-pointed star, made from some manner of grey stone unfamiliar to me; the other was an exquisitely made figure just over seven inches in height, representing nothing so much as the figment of a nightmare. It represented, certainly, some ancient monster, or, rather, an aboriginal concept of an ancient monster, doubtless long extinct if anything even remotely resembling it had ever walked the earth. The creature was suggestively anthropoid in outline, but its head was octopoid, and its face was a mass of feelers resembling tentacles, while its body appeared to be at one and the same time scaly and rubbery-looking. Its hind and fore feet had disproportionately large claws, and something which resembled bat-wings appeared to grow from its back. Because it was corpulent, and its face of a horrible malignance, the squatting figure had about it an unavoidable force—a vivid, unforgettable impression of great evil—not evil as it is commonly understood, but a terrible, soul-destroying horror transcending evil as mere men can know it. Its aspect was perhaps all the more fearful because the cephalopod head was bent forward, and the aspect of the squatting figure was that of a creature about to rise, as it were, to pounce forward. To its base, my great-uncle had pasted but one brief note, more puzzling than the others. It read only, "C.?—or some other?" Though my knowledge of such primitive art was, as I have admitted, comparatively slight, I was convinced that there was no link between the art of this strange figure and the known types of art with which I had the familiarity of any reasonably well-educated individual, and this conviction served to make my great-uncle's acquisition seem all the more mysterious.

There was likewise no clue to its origin—at least, as far as the figure itself was concerned. I sought this in vain, but nothing appeared save only my great-uncle's strange question. Moreover, there was about this figure the feeling and the look of vast, incalculable age; this was unmistakable, for the material out of which it had been fashioned was a greenish-black stone with iridescent flecks and striations which suggested nothing geologically familiar to me. Furthermore, there were presently apparent, along the base of the figure, certain characters which I had initially mistaken for carving marks; yet it seemed clear after prolonged examination that these characters were not the haphazard, slipshod scars of any carving tool, but rather carefully cut into the stone; they were, in fact, hieroglyphs or characters of some language which bore no more resemblance to known linguistics than the carving itself did to the known types of art.

Small wonder, perhaps, that I was soon persuaded to set aside my paper on the Creole culture and background in favor of some more extensive research into my great-uncle's papers. It seemed quite patent to me that, however secretive he might have been, he was on the track of something, and there were certain factors—notably his card inquiring about "pagan worship" among the Creoles, and his interest in the aboriginal pieces he had preserved—which tended to show that the object of his quest was very probably some form of ancient religion which he was attempting to trace back through the centuries in the remote corners of the world where its survival was far more likely than in the metropolitan centers of our own time.

My resolve, however, was far more easily made than carried out, for my great-uncle's papers were in nothing at all resembling order or chronology. I had hoped, because of the comparative neatness of their piles in the trunks, that they were in at least reading order, but it took me a considerable time to effect any sort of even primary arrangement, and an even longer time to establish a sequence of a sort—though there was no assurance that that sequence was correct. Nevertheless, there was some reason to believe that if it were not, at least I could not be very far off, for my great-uncle's travel notes permitted of some dating, since it was possible to discover where he had travelled and what the order of his travels was. It was also possible to hit upon the original impetus of his travels, so unlikely a way for him to pass his last years, judging by his middle and earlier life.

It seemed quite probable that some experience, real or assimilated, asso-

ciated with the two years during which he taught at Miskatonic University had set him off. But the immediate direction of his first travels apparently lay in a curious manuscript, which was evidently that of a castaway; how it had come into my great-uncle's possession I had no way of knowing, though it was probable that the short newspaper clipping attached to the manuscript might have put him on its trail. The clipping was but a brief account of the finding of a manuscript in a bottle; it was headed: LOST SHIP MYSTERY SOLVED. H.M.S. ADVOCATE SANK AT SEA! and read:

> "Auckland, N. Z.: December 17—The mystery of *H.M.S. Advocate,* lost last August, appeared to be solved today with the discovery of a manuscript written by First Mate Alistair Greenbie. The manuscript was discovered in a bottle floating not far from the coast of New Zealand by a fishing crew. While it appeared to be in large part the raving of a mind already disordered by long exposure, the essential facts of the *Advocate's* foundering seem clear. After clearing Singapore, the ship was caught in the storm which swept down from the Kuriles in mid-August; it was at that time in S. Latitude 47° 53', W. Longitude 127° 37'. The crew of the *Advocate* was forced to abandon ship ten hours after the storm struck, and while the storm was still raging. Thereafter, they were at the mercy of high seas, and, if Greenbie's account can be believed, of incredibly brutal pirates whose action decimated the men who remained alive as the boat bearing Greenbie and his companions drove for the shore of an island which was presumably one of the Gilbert or Mariana Islands. Such an island as that described by Greenbie, however, is not known to local navigators, who are inclined to cast doubt upon Greenbie's account following the forced leave-taking of the ship."

The manuscript itself was written on the relatively small sheets of a pocket notebook and was pinned together. Though thick in pages, it was written in a shaky hand, and there were not many words on the page. Nevertheless, it was of substantial length, considering that its writer was very probably suffering from exposure and more or less convinced that he was doomed to die at sea.

"I am all that is left of the crew of *H.M.S. Advocate,* which set out from Singapore August 17th, this year. On the 21st we ran into a storm, S. Latitude 47° 53', W. Longitude 127° 37', coming out of the north and blowing something terrible. Captain Randall ordered all hands to and we did our best, but could not stand up against the storm in a craft no more seaworthy than the *Advocate.* At the beginning of the sixth watch, ten hours after the storm hit us, the order came to abandon ship; she was settling fast; something had torn her on the port side; and it was no good trying to save her. We got off in two boats. Captain Randall was in charge of the one, which was the last off, and I was in charge of the other. Five men were lost getting away from the ship; the water was running higher than I ever saw it, and when the *Advocate* went down it was all the worse.

"We were separated in the dark, but we got together again next day. We had enough provisions to last a week, if we took care, and we figured we were somewhere between the Carolines and the Admiralties, closer to the latter and New Guinea; so we did what we could against the high seas to go in that direction. On the second day out, Blake got hysterical and caused an unfortunate accident; in the fight, the compass was lost. Since it was the only compass between the two boats, its loss was a serious matter. Nevertheless, we maintained, we thought, a course straight for the Admiralties or New Guinea, whichever showed up first, but after nightfall the first night we saw by the stars that we were off course by west. On the next night we were still off course, more so, if anything, but we could not be sure of our direction even after we had rectified the course, because clouds came up and covered the stars, all but the Southern Cross and Canopus, which would be seen just dimly behind the clouds for some time after the rest of them were down behind.

"We lost four more men in those days. Siddons, Harker, Peterson, and Wiles went out of their heads. Then, during the fourth night, Hewett, who was on watch, woke us all up with a loud yell; and, when we were awake, we heard what he had heard—yelling and crying—it sounded horrible—coming over the water from where we judged Captain Randall's boat was; but in a few minutes it was all over. We tried to hail them, but we could get no answer; if it had been one of the men going berserk, we would have heard. But there was nothing. After a while we didn't try any more, just waited for morning, all of us more or less afraid in the darkness, with those terrible cries still ringing in our ears.

"Then the morning came, and we looked for the other boat. We saw it, all right, but there wasn't a man to be seen aboard her. I ordered the boat to make for her, thinking perhaps there still were men lying down in her, but when we came up alongside, there was nothing, not a sign of anybody, except that the Captain's cap was still lying there. I looked the boat over carefully. The only thing I noticed was that the gunwales looked *slimy,* from the outside in, just as if something had pushed up out of the water and trailed into the boat. I couldn't make anything out of that.

"We cut away from the boat, leaving her just as we found her. We were not strong enough to warrant pulling the extra weight, and there was nothing to be gained by it. We didn't know which direction we were going now, didn't know just where we were, but we still believed we were near the Admiralties. About four hours after sun-up, Adams gave a shout and pointed straight ahead, and there was land! We pulled for it, but it was farther off than we thought. It wasn't until late afternoon that we got close enough to see it fair.

"It was an island, but it wasn't like any I ever saw before. It was about a mile long, and, though it did not appear to have any vegetation on it, it seemed to have some kind of building in the middle of it; a big black stone pillar stuck up there, and down at the water's edge there seemed to be pieces of masonry. Jacobson had the glass, and I took it from him. Clouds were up and the sun was near to setting, but I could still see. The island didn't look right. It looked like mud, even the high ground. The building looked wrong, too. I thought the heat and the shortage of water was getting me, but just the same I said we wouldn't make for shore till next day.

"We never made for shore.

"That night it was Richardson's watch up to midnight, but he was too weak to take it; so Petrie took it and Simonds sat with him, in case one should fall asleep. We were all dog tired, having tried too hard to reach that land and overdoing it on the short rations we had, and we were all soon asleep. It seemed that we hadn't been asleep long when a yell from Simonds woke us. I was up quick as a cat and at his side.

"He was sitting there staring—his eyes wide and his mouth open—like a man in the extremity of fear. He babbled that Petrie was gone; that something had come up out of the water and just took him off the boat. That was all he had time for; that was all any of us had time for. The next minute

they were all over us, coming up out of the water like devils, swarming up on all sides!

"The men fought like mad. I felt something tearing at me—like a scaly arm with a hand at the end of it, but *I swear to God that hand had webbed fingers! And I swear that the face I saw was like a cross between a frog and a man! And the thing had gills, and was slimy to the touch!*

"That is the last I remember of that night. Next thing something hit me; I think it was poor, fear-crazed Jed Lambert, and he probably thought he was hitting out at one of the things boarding us. I went down and I stayed down and that is probably what saved me; the things left me for dead.

"When I came to, it was day by some hours. That island was gone—I was far out, away from it. I drifted all that day, and night after, and this morning I put this down so that if I don't reach land, or if I am not sighted soon, I can put it into the bottle and hope and pray someone may find it and come back and get those things that took my men and Captain Randall and his men—for there is no doubt that is what happened to them, too—pulled out of their boat in the night by something from the lurking hells beneath these cursed waters.

"Signed, ALISTAIR H. GREENBIE
First Mate, H.M.S. ADVOCATE."

Whatever the authorities in Auckland thought of Greenbie's statement, it is certain that my great-uncle viewed it with the utmost gravity, for, following in chronological sequence, there was a very large assortment of similar stories—accounts of strange, inexplicable happenings, narratives of unsolved mysteries, of curious disappearances, of all manner of outré occurrences which might be printed in thousands of newspapers and read with but the most superficial interest by the vast majority of people.

For the most part, these accounts were short; it seemed evident that the majority of the editors themselves utilized them only as "filler" material, and it doubtless occurred to my great-uncle that if the Greenbie statement could have been treated so cavalierly, then other items might have similar stories behind them. Now it should be made clear that the clippings so carefully gathered by my great-uncle were similar in only one particular—and that is their utter strangeness. Apart from this, there was no apparent simi-

larity among them at all. The several long accounts among them were of matters which were of some local concern; these were as follows—

1) A comprehensive resume of the facts concerning the disappearance of Dr. Laban Shrewsbury of Arkham, Massachusetts, to which were appended various obscure paragraphs copied from a manuscript or book by the vanished man, entitled *An Investigation into the Myth-Patterns of Latter-day Primitives with Especial Reference to the R'lyeh Text.* For instance: "The sea origin would seem incontrovertible, for every narrative of Cthulhu is related in some way, directly or indirectly, to the oceans; this is true whether it is of some manifestation supposedly stemming from Cthulhu, or whether an account of actions of his followers. One is not too certain of the validity of the Atlantis legend; yet there are certain apparent superficial similarities one ought not to dismiss without investigation. The focal points of the activities, arrived at by simply establishing concentric circles throughout various maps of the globe, would seem to be eight in number—1) the South Pacific, with the center of the circle being at or near Ponape in the Carolines; 2) the Atlantic off the U. S. coast, with the center just off Innsmouth, Massachusetts; 3) the subterranean waters under Peru, centering about the ancient citadel of the Incas, Machu Picchu; 4) the North African country and the Mediterranean, with the center being in the vicinity of the Saharan Oasis of El Nigro; 5) North Canada and Alaska, centering north of Medicine Hat; 6) the Atlantic, centering in the Azores; 7) the southern half of the United States embracing the islands, centering somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico; and 8) Southwest Asia, the focal point a desert area in the Kuwait country (?) said to be near an ancient buried city (Irem, the City of Pillars?)."

2) An extensive inquiry, with notes, however disjointed, of the mysterious invasion and partial destruction of Innsmouth by Federal agents.

3) A weekly newspaper account of the disappearance of Henry W. Akeley from his hill country home near Brattleboro, with some mention of the horribly perfect representations of Akeley's face and hands found in the chair from which he had vanished, and some less prominent mention of terrible footprints glimpsed in the earth around the house.

4) A translation of a lengthy letter which had appeared in a Cairo paper concerning manifestations of strange sea beasts half-seen in the waters off the Moroccan coast.

There were many of the shorter clippings, but all, like the long ones,

concerned matters of almost bizarre strangeness, or with the suggestion of amazing mystery. There were accounts of strange storms, inexplicable earth tremors, police raids on cult gatherings, unsolved crimes of every description, unusual natural phenomena, narratives of travellers in out-of-the-way corners of the earth, and hundreds of similar matters.

In addition to these clippings there were various books—studies of the Inca civilization, two books on Easter Island, and baffling passages from books bearing titles of which I had never previously heard—the *Celaeno Fragments,* the Pnakotic Manuscripts, the *R'lyeh Text,* the *Book of Eibon,* the *Sussex Manuscript,* and the like.

Finally, then, there were my great-uncle's jottings.

These were, unfortunately, almost as cryptic as some of the accounts he had so carefully hoarded, but it was nevertheless possible to arrive at certain conclusions regarding them. There was nowhere any concise summary of his findings, but there was manifest a certain progression which led to unalterable conclusions. From the tenor of his jottings, it was easy enough to gather: 1) that my great-uncle was on the track of a loosely banded organization which worshipped one of a number of allied beings, the one specific object of my great-uncle's search being the central headquarters of the cult of Cthulhu (occasionally spelled Kthulhu, Clooloo, etc.) and that some or all of the remaining art objects were related to the cult worship; 2) that the worship of this being was very ancient and very evil; 3) that my great-uncle suspected that the curiously repellant stone image of unknown origin was an aboriginal artist's concept of the being Cthulhu; 4) that my great-uncle more than suspected a relationship between the untoward events of the clippings he had collected, and the worship of this or allied beings. In this connection, his jottings are of singularly marked suggestiveness, as the following indicate:

"Certain parallels present themselves with damning and inescapable deductions to be drawn. For instance, Dr. Shrewsbury vanished within a year of the publication of his book on myth-patterns. The British scholar, Sir Landon Etrick, was killed in a strange accident six weeks after he permitted publication in the *Occult Review* his paper inquiring into the 'Fish-Men' of Ponape. The American writer, H. P. Lovecraft, died within a year of publication of his curious 'fiction,' *The Shadow Over Innsmouth.* Of these and others only Lovecraft's death seems devoid of odd accident. NB: Some inquiry into

H. P. L.'s allergy to cold is indicated. Also note a pronounced aversion to the sea and all things pertaining to it, carried so far as to inspire physical illness at sight of sea food.

"The conclusion is unavoidable that Shrewsbury and Lovecraft, too—and perhaps Etrick and others, as well—were close upon the track of some momentous discoveries concerning C."

"Note the curious significance of the oasis name: *El Nigro.* Roughly translated, this would be 'The Dark One,' which in turn would signify not alone the 'devil' but any creature of darkness. NB: No account available suggesting that either C. or those directly serving him have come forth save by darkness, except for the Johansen narrative recorded by Lovecraft. Only his minions by day. Compare with the Greenbie paper! Can there be any doubt but that the islands seen by Johansen and Greenbie are one and the same? I think not. But where, then, is it? No record out of Ponape. None out of Queensland. No mapped record of any kind. The Johansen account and that of Greenbie agree that it must lie between New Guinea and the Carolines, possibly west of the Admiralties. Johansen hints that the island is *not* fixed, but sinks and rises. (If so, what is the explanation of the 'buildings?')"

"Everywhere evidence, direct or hinted, of ichthyic or batrachian 'men'—particularly in connection with certain events. Seen in Arkham prior to the disappearance of Dr. Shrewsbury. Glimpsed in London just after the death of Etrick. Greenbie mentions beings that seemed to him 'like a cross between a frog and a man!' The Lovecraft fictions abound with them, and his tale of Innsmouth suggests a horrible reason why the batrachian servitors of C. would not want a dead man, thus leaving Greenbie to escape."

"Apropos the Greenbie manuscript, compare such accounts as are available of the mysterious vanishing of the *Marie Celeste,* and other ships. If sea creatures could board boats of such size as the *Vigilant* (cf. Johansen), why not larger ships? If the hypothesis is tenable, therein lies a plausible if incredibly horrible explanation for many a mystery of the sea, for countless derelicts and vanished vessels. NB: On the other hand, the only accounts which might constitute direct evidence, it must be remembered, are those of men whose wits might have been jumbled by unaccustomed hardships."

There were many more notes of a similar nature; but there were also others, profoundly puzzling, evidently stemming from these primary notes. As my great-uncle delved deeper and deeper into his research, I found his notes tending toward growing obscurity. For instance, he wrote in one place, quite clearly under the stress of some excitement—"Could there not be some purely scientific principle involved in the time-space travel reputedly the power of the Ancient Ones? That is to say, something related to time as dimension, reducing C. and the others to utterly alien beings subject to other laws, however antipodal to natural laws as we know them?" And again: "What about the possibility of atomic disintegration with subsequent reintegration across time and space? And, if time is to be viewed purely as a dimension, and space as another, the 'openings' which are repeatedly mentioned must be fissures in those dimensions. What else?"

But the most disturbing aspect of my great-uncle's strange quest did not make its appearance in his notes until the last few months of his life. Then there began to become manifest a marked uneasiness, and definite evidence that the cult or cults in which my great-uncle was interested were not phenomena of past time, but had survived into the present, and were, moreover, definitely malign and evil. For there appeared in the body of the notes certain patent questions—put down for himself, as if my great-uncle were asking himself questions the import of which he could hardly credit.

"If I saw rightly," he wrote in one place, after returning from Transylvania, "my travelling companion was of marked batrachian aspect. His speech, however, was the purest French. Nothing to show where he boarded the Simplon-Orient. It took effort to lose him at Calais. Am I being followed? If so, where can *they* have found out?" And again: "Followed in Rangoon, without doubt. Follower extremely elusive, but, judging from a reflection in a window pane, not one of the Deep Ones. In stature suggestive of the Tcho-Tcho people, which would be apropos, since their habitat is supposedly nearby." And yet once more: "Three in Arkham, in the vicinity of the University. The only question seems to be: how much do they suspect that I know? And will they wait until I publish, as in the cases of Shrewsbury, Vordennes, and the others?"

The implications in all this were crystal clear.

My great-uncle, hard on the track of a strange, malign cult, had come to their notice, and his existence was menaced by followers of the cult. Then it

was, with instinctive conviction, that I knew my great-uncle's death in Limehouse was not an accident at all, but a carefully arranged murder!

2

I COME NOW TO those events which confirmed my resolution to abandon my Creole project and take up instead the problem which had engaged the attention of my Great-Uncle Asaph Gilman. My purely cursory interest had become crystalized at the conviction that my great-uncle had been murdered, but when I began to cast about for some clue as to where to begin my search for his murderers and the cult to which they belonged, I did not know where to start. Search his papers as I might, there seemed to be no one place to which, or person to whom, I could go in order to make a beginning. Despite all the terrible hints and suggestions of my great-uncle's papers and books, there was no true focal point; considered as a whole, the papers were more in the nature of preliminary work leading up to hypotheses and conclusions which my great-uncle had not had time to make.

What resolved my doubts as well as the obscurities of my great-uncle's papers was a series of extraordinary dreams and their even more extraordinary aftermath. These dreams began on the very first night after I had come to my decision in regard to my great-uncle's search culminating in his murder before he had had opportunity to conclude his quest. The dreams were of a remarkable vividness, and each was a singularly perfect unit, with none of the haziness, the incoherence, and the incredible phantasmagoria of most dreams. They were, in effect, astonishing in that they were vivid enough to seem not dreams at all, but clairvoyant and clairaudient experiences transcending natural laws. Moreover, each dream impressed me sufficiently to impel me to set it down for my future reference, so that I might forget no single detail of the experience.

My first dream, then, was as follows:

> Someone called my name. "Claiborne, Claiborne Boyd! Claiborne, Claiborne Boyd!" The voice was a man's voice, and it seemed to come from a very great distance, and from *above.* I saw myself wake from sleep; as I did so, the head and shoulders of a man appeared. The head was that of an elderly man with long white hair,

clean-shaven, with a firm, pronounced chin, and full lips. He had a Roman nose, and wore odd dark glasses with shields running along the side of the eyes as well. Since I awakened, he said no more but bade me watch.

The scene changed; the head faded away and vanished. I, my bed, my room likewise vanished. The scene which came up in its stead was vaguely familiar. I passed along a street which appeared to be Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was away from the University, and in a district where professional people live. There was someone I was meant to see here, and presently I found him; it was a tall, gaunt man, dressed in black. He walked oddly, and wore a muffler and tinted glasses. Though he appeared to be a stranger in Cambridge, he knew just where he wanted to go. He entered a building and went directly to a suite of offices. The offices were those of Judah and Byron, Attorneys at Law. He entered the offices and asked to see Mr. Judah. After a moment of waiting, he was shown into Mr. Judah's office.

Mr. Judah was a middle-aged man who wore pince-nez. His hair was beginning to grey at his temples, and he dressed plainly in grey. The suit was gabardine, the cut severe. I heard them talk.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Smith," said Mr. Judah. "What can I do for you?"

Mr. Smith's voice was very strange; it sounded muffled and distorted, as if he had a speech defect brought about by overproduction of saliva. He said, "I understand you represent the estate of the late Asaph Gilman, sir?"

Mr. Judah nodded.

"Mr. Gilman was engaged on a work in which I, as a fellow scholar, have a deep interest. I made Mr. Gilman's acquaintance in Vienna over a year ago, and I was given to understand at that time that he had papers and notes about his progress in his work. These papers cannot be of any conceivable interest to anyone but a scholar similarly interested. Can you tell me whether there is any possibility of my acquiring them from Mr. Gilman's estate?"

Mr. Judah shook his head. "I am sorry, Mr. Smith, but Mr. Gilman's papers have gone to his next of kin, at his special request."

"Perhaps I could arrange to purchase them from him?"

"That is out of our hands, Mr. Smith."

"Can you give me his address, sir?"

Though Mr. Judah hesitated, he finally said, "I see no harm in it," and gave him my name and address.

The scene vanished, and the head of the elderly white-haired man returned. He told me to take care of the papers, to conceal them in a safe place. Then the dream ended.

Now, in itself, such a dream would not be unusual, following my prolonged study of my great-uncle's strange papers. But its extraordinary vividness made such an impression on me, not only at my awaking after the dream had run its course, but throughout the following morning, that I was at last impelled to place a long-distance call to Mr. Judah himself, and ask him whether anyone had made inquiry for me.

"My dear Mr. Boyd, what a coincidence!" his voice came over the wire—in precisely the accents of the Mr. Judah of my dream. "We had a man in here yesterday asking after you—or, rather, after your great-uncle's papers. A Mr. Japhet Smith. We took the liberty of giving him your address. Probably a crackpot, but evidently quite harmless. He seemed to want to buy your great-uncle's papers or at least to consult them."

As may well be imagined, this confirmation of my dream had the most surprising effect on me. I had no longer any doubt whatsoever that "Mr. Japhet Smith" was not a fellow-scholar at all, but a representative of the same malign cult which had brought about my great-uncle's death. If this were the case, he would certainly come to New Orleans after the papers. What then to do? He was not likely to be deterred by my refusal to sell them, but would undoubtedly take other means to obtain them. I determined, therefore, to lose no time in re-arranging and packing my great-uncle's papers, and moving them from my quarters to some place of concealment where Smith or any of his fellows would not be likely to discover them.

I spent the afternoon, therefore, going through the papers once more, and, in doing so, I came across two very curious jottings on the backs of envelopes. They were more than usually cryptic, and both made pointed reference to the same subject. The first, evidently made while my great-uncle was

in Cairo, read simply: "Andrada? Surely not!" The second, made on his last visit to Paris, just prior to his fateful visit to London, read: "Ask Andros about Andrada." I recognized these jottings at last for a direction in which to take up my great-uncle's quest. But who was Andros? And where was he?

I redoubled my efforts to find more information in the papers before me, some further clue to the identity of Andros or Andrada—but there was nothing. However, in view of the fact that both names were Latin in origin, it seemed fairly reasonable to deduce that their bearers lived in some Spanish or Portuguese speaking country; and, since my great-uncle's travels had taken him only for the briefest of times into Spain and Portugal, it was far more likely that these late objects of his interest were residents of some other place on the globe—from the Azores to South America. That it was in all probability South America seemed indicated, since there were enough hints in my great-uncle's papers to suggest that his next visit would be made to some South American place.

But I had little time to speculate farther, for the day was drawing to a close, and much work still needed to be done to make the papers ready for transportation. I was motivated not only by my curious dream and its confirmation, but by an even stranger conviction that I could not afford to lose any time whatsoever. I worked, therefore, with all haste, and by the end of the day I had finished. True, certain facts from my great-uncle's papers I had committed to memory; but all his books and papers themselves I had carefully re-packed, and by the end of that day I had had them taken to the local express office, and committed them to ninety-day storage, prepaying all charges, with additional payment to cover subsequent instruction—that, if the two trunks were not called for within the set period, they were to be shipped to the library of Miskatonic University, in Arkham. Following this, I had taken all receipts and mailed them to myself in care of Judah and Byron, with a brief covering note of instructions sent separately.

When I returned to my apartment, darkness had fallen. Was it my imagination or had someone been skulking about outside the building in which I stayed? Surely Mr. Japhet Smith had not had time to reach New Orleans. I shook myself free of my fancies and grimly mounted to my apartment, half expecting to find evidence of unwelcome callers. But there was nothing, and I allowed myself a brief smile at the manner in which my great-uncle's odd papers and my strange dream had taken hold of me—brief, be-

cause I remembered, if my great-uncle had been right in his speculation that the cult of Cthulhu had members all over the world, it was certainly not impossible that there were some in New Orleans and that Smith might well have reached one of them by telegraph! And, indeed, had not my great-uncle asked me to keep posted for any hint of strange pagan worship—by which surely he had reference to that of Cthulhu and those nebulous others?

I put out my light and went to the window, standing behind the diaphanous curtains to look down into the street below. The quarter where I lived was one of the oldest in New Orleans; its buildings were gracious, if old-fashioned; they were inhabited by artists, writers, and students, for the most part, and certain devotees of music from the immortals to the blues were likewise domiciled in the vicinity. The street, therefore, was likely to be lively at all hours, and now, between nine and ten o'clock in the evening—a still comparatively early hour—there was no lack of people. It took some time to isolate anyone who did not seem to belong to the street. Even then, I could not be sure. But certainly there was one individual, not plainly visible, who might indeed be watching this house, and my apartment in particular. He walked slowly up one side of the block and down the other, and, though he never glanced in the direction of the house, he was aware of every opening and closing of the door; of that I was as certain as if I had had incontrovertible knowledge. I was struck, too, by his gait, which was peculiarly shuffling, like that of Japhet Smith in my dream—and, more damnably still, akin to that gait ascribed to the batrachian followers of Cthulhu in various of the accounts accompanying the papers of which I had now temporarily disposed.

I drew back from the window, my mind in turmoil. Lacking any knowledge, I could not proceed against a casual walker on the street, who might embarrass me by turning out to be a poet in pursuit of the muse—which would probably be as natural and readily-accepted an explanation as any that might be given. It was not too far-fetched to suppose that some attempt to get at my room might be made. However, after sitting for some time in the dark trying to decide what I might do if our positions were reversed, I concluded that, if the fellow below were actually a watcher, the course of events must have been as follows—Smith had telegraphed to put a watch on me and my apartment; the watch had arrived fortuitously during my absence with the trunks, and would now stay, perhaps changing places with someone

else for part of the time, until Smith himself could arrive. Presumably the members of the cult were not eager to create "incidents" by means of which keys to their presence might be afforded anyone curious enough to look for them; hence it seemed unlikely that any sort of attack would be made until Smith had satisfied himself that no other course was open to him.

Nevertheless, I waited in the darkness until midnight; only then, when the street below was deserted, and I could no longer catch sight of the watcher, did I venture to go to bed.

That night I had the second dream, which was even more startling than the first, though its full import was not destined to come to me for some days thereafter. As in the case of the first—particularly after the confirmation of that first dream—I made a full and complete record of it.

> The dream began exactly as did the first dream.
>
> The grey-haired man with dark glasses appeared as before. This time there was more than a haze surrounding him. In the background rose what appeared to be a great building of some kind. It was not clear whether the background was an interior or exterior, but there was a shadowy representation of what seemed to be a massive stone table between the head and the masonry behind. It was masonry of utterly alien construction—a great vaulted chamber, if an interior, the stone groinings of which were lost in shadow above; there appeared to be a round window of colossal size, and monolithic columns beside which the head was incredibly puny. There were shelves holding gigantic books along the walls; strange hieroglyphs were visible on their backs. Indistinctly, carvings appeared to stand out on the monstrous megalithic granite masonry, the pieces of which seemed to be convex-topped blocks supported by precise fitted concave-bottomed courses. No flooring was visible anywhere, but neither was any part below the chest of the individual who called to me.
>
> I was told to pay close attention.
>
> The scene faded. Once more a familiar street appeared. This time I recognized it at once. It was a street in Natchez, Mississippi, where I had pursued my studies prior to taking up the Creole study in New Orleans. I seemed to move along the street, but no one was

aware of me. The post office came into view. I entered the post office. I went through the lobby, past the rows of boxes, into the interior of the post office. The postmaster and his assistants were at work there. No one noticed me.

Now something very strange took place. The shelving into which letters were placed for shipment from the post office appeared to fade, and down behind the shelves I saw a thick letter. It was addressed to me, and I recognized the handwriting as my great-uncle's. It was post-marked London the day before my great-uncle's death. It was clear immediately what happened. The letter—like my great-uncle's last card from Paris—had been sent to my Natchez address, and forwarded from there, for it bore my New Orleans address alongside the scratched-out Natchez address, but somehow the letter slipped down and was overlooked. Now it was not seen by anyone in the post office.

Once more I heard the voice of the man in black spectacles. This time he told me to mark his every word.

"Mr. Boyd," he said—his manner friendly but urgent—"you must do precisely as I say. As you know, your apartment is being watched. Tomorrow Mr. Smith will call; it is not necessary that you see him. Sometime tomorrow, prepare to leave your rooms without the necessity of returning there, make sure that you are not followed, and go to Natchez. Retrieve the letter in the post office. It is from your great-uncle and it is clear enough to enable you to follow instructions if you are still determined to do so. Take the utmost care that this letter does not go astray."

Then the voice faded away.

It is a tribute to the vividness of the dream that I did not for a moment question its validity; from the instant that I awoke in the darkness of my room, I knew that my great-uncle's last letter lay lost in the post office at Natchez, and I knew, too, that with the coming of dawn, I would set about to follow the precise instructions set down by my mentor in dreams—go to Natchez and read my great-uncle's final letter with every intention of following any direction it might contain.

Despite a gnawing curiosity to come face to face with Japhet Smith, I

realized full well that once he knew of my unwillingness to part with my great-uncle's papers, it would be triply difficult if not impossible for me to elude pursuit. It was, therefore, with something akin to reluctance that I evaded my follower next day—for I was followed; I had not the shadow of a doubt about that; and my follower was an individual of suggestively repellant aspect—wide-mouthed, squat-browed, lidless-eyed, and almost earless, with an odd kind of leathery skin. I had no difficulty doing so by means of one of the most time-honored methods of avoiding pursuit—going into one door of a building and out the other.

In Natchez I could not, of course, hint that I knew of the existence of my great-uncle's lost letter; but I simply explained that I had come up from New Orleans to inquire after a letter I should have received, and prevailed upon them finally, after my earnest and anxious entreaties, to look behind the rack where I knew it to be lying. There it was found, amidst astonished apologies, and given to me. By this time, I had long ceased to wonder by what agency I had been acquainted with this and the facts about Smith; that my dreams were not orthodox dream experiences was only too manifest, but by what power I acquired this dream-knowledge I could not surmise.

The tangibility of the letter in hand, however, overcame speculation. I opened it eagerly and read. A glance was enough to assure me that it was of the utmost importance insofar as my great-uncle's strange quest was concerned, and that it had been written at a time of great stress, when my great-uncle no longer had any doubt about the identity of his pursuers, and when he had some intimation of his fate.

"My dear nephew," he had written in a script slightly larger than his usual small writing, doubtless because of his agitation, "I feel it incumbent upon me to take such steps as might assure me of some success in the search I have been conducting for many months—even if after death, for it is certain that my footsteps are dogged by some of the Deep Ones day and night. Some time ago I made provision in my will that you were to receive my papers, as well as a modest stipend to aid your work, whether it followed my own course or not. I make haste now to acquaint you with the nature of that work.

"Some time ago—let it suffice to say that it was after my retirement from Harvard—I stumbled upon a most curious and rare book, the *Necronomicon,* by an Arabian, Abdul Alhazred—a book concerning which perhaps

the less expounded the better, for it dealt with a very ancient worship, with cults and cult rites, weaving an entire mythology which seemed at first glance to parallel the familiar Creation story, but which presently touched upon strange corners in my memory, so that before I knew, I was deeply wrapped in the mythology of which it treated. This was, candidly, because I knew of certain events which seemed most oddly to verify some of the things written about so many centuries ago, and I determined, therefore, to study the subject with closer attention—one of those impulses which often come to retired educators. Would that I had turned away from that accursed book and forgotten it!

"For not only did I unearth evidence of certain damnable facts concerning the book and allied texts which I studied, but I discovered that cults of peoples were devoted to serving ancient beings still in our own time. And I learned the truth of that strange couplet of the Arab's—

That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange eons even death may die.

"There is far too little time to tell you all. Believe me when I say only that there would appear to be indisputable and damning evidence that this earth, in common with other planets and stars in this and other universes, was at one time inhabited by beings not altogether of flesh and blood, or at least of that flesh and blood we understand, and not entirely of matter as we understand it, beings called the Great Old Ones, whose marks are still to be found in hidden places of the world—the Easter Island pieces, for one—beings which had been expelled from the elder stars by the Elder Gods, who were beneficent, while the Great Old Ones or Ancient Ones were malign in intent insofar as mankind is concerned. I have neither time nor space to recapitulate this entire mythology to you. Suffice it to say that these Great Old Ones did not die, but were imprisoned or took refuge—this is not clear, but presumably it is the former—in great subterranean places on earth and on other stars, and legend has it that 'when the stars are right,' which is to say—when the stars are once again in the position in which they were at the time of the vanishing of the Great Old Ones: a cycle, as it were—they will rise again, the way having been prepared for them by their servants on earth.

"Of these, the most dreaded is called Cthulhu. I have come upon evidence of belief in Cthulhu in all corners of the globe—in the far north, certain Eskimos carry on a ritual to the supreme elder devil or *tornasuk,* an image of which bears a striking resemblance to those hideous bas-reliefs supposedly typical of the Great Old Ones in appearance; in the Arabian deserts as well as in Egypt and Morocco, there is worship of a fearful being of the sea; in queer, backward areas of our own country there is a devilish adherence to an ancient belief in things half-frog, half-man—and so on, without end. I became convinced that worship of Hastur and Shub-Niggurath and Yog-Sothoth was less widespread than that of Cthulhu, and I set out to discover as many pockets of such worship as possible.

"Admittedly, I did so at first with the most impersonal of motives. But, as the final dread knowledge came—that these servants were preparing to open the portals of time and space to beings of which our own science knows nothing and against which it is likely to be powerless—I ceased being impersonal, and I began consciously to attempt to learn the identity of the most potent of the groups following and serving the cult of Cthulhu, and the leader of that group, bent upon doing everything in my power to end the activities of that group, even if it meant exterminating their leader myself.

"Though I am close to learning his identity, I am yet too far away. Somehow those hellish frog-men or fish-men, whichever they may be called, known as the Deep Ones, who are among the closest servants of Cthulhu, have discovered my activities. I do not know whether they are aware of my intention; they cannot be, for I have not heretofore set it down or confessed it. Yet they are watching me—as they have been watching for months past—and I feel that I may not have much time left.

"There is no good in burdening you with further details.

"I want to say only that if you decide to carry on, I think the most likely focal point of activity now is in Peru, in the Inca country beyond the old fortress of Salapunco. The first thing you must do is to go to Lima, call on Professor Vibberto Andros of the University there; tell him I have sent you—or better still, show him this letter—and ask him about Andrada."

That, apart from his signature, was the complete letter. Accompanying it was a crudely-drawn map of a terrain utterly unknown to me, and with no identifying key.

3

PROFESSOR VIBBERTO ANDROS was a short, thin man, venerable in appearance, with silky white hair, and an ascetic face. His skin was dark, but not swarthy, and his eyes were black. He read my great-uncle's last letter with great deliberation, but with interest he made no effort to conceal. When at last he put it down, he shook his head sympathetically and expressed his condolence at my great-uncle's death, of which the letter was his first knowledge.

I thanked him and asked the question I had to ask, regardless of such inner convictions as I had—whether, in his opinion, my great-uncle suffered from mental aberrations.

"I think not," he replied judiciously. Then he shrugged and added, "But who is to decide this—as you call it—'mental aberration?' Neither of us, surely. You think it perhaps because of this—" he tapped the letter— "and his papers? But I am much afraid these things are true, as he has written. I do not know to what degree, nor whether more or less. Your great-uncle was not alone in his belief. And there are books, manuscripts, documents—rare, well cared for in some of our great libraries, seldom consulted. But they are there, written by people separated by centuries in time, by space incalculable—all treat of the same phenomena. Surely that is not coincidence?"

I agreed that it was not likely and asked about Andrada.

He raised his eyebrows. "It puzzles me he should press you to ask about him. I do not know why he wishes to know. Andrada—Fr. Andrada—is a priest, a missionary among the Indians of the interior. In his own way he is a great man, possibly even a saintly man, though the Church hesitates to recognize him as such—the Church is exceedingly careful in such matters, as no doubt you know, and that is well-advised, since it is presumably infallible in spiritual matters, and it cannot afford to be in error. Andrada has worked for many years among the Indians, and I understand his conversions are numbered well in the thousands."

"For some reason my great-uncle believed you could give me some information about Andrada which he sought," I said, choosing my words carefully. "Would it be possible to see him in person? Is he in Lima?"

"I am sure he would see you, certainly. But the problem is to find him. His work takes him into the remotest places of the country—and, as you

know, we have many, since most of Peru is along the coast, and the mountains are difficult and treacherous—even for many of the Inca descendants."

I went on then to inquire further about the myth-patterns into which my great-uncle had been researching, and, in the course of our conversation, it occurred to me to ask my host whether he knew anyone fitting the description of my dream mentor. I had no sooner mentioned the distinctive dark spectacles than Professor Andros nodded and smiled.

"Who could forget him, indeed? A very wise man. I met him many years ago in Mexico City at a convention of educators there. I was much impressed by him."

"A South American, then?"

"On the contrary, a countryman of yours—Dr. Laban Shrewsbury, of Arkham, Massachusetts."

"But he is dead!" I cried out involuntarily. "That cannot be!"

Professor Andros turned his black eyes on me and gazed at me steadily for a long moment before replying. "I wonder. I have said he was a very wise man—I do not mean merely in the assimilation of knowledge. He vanished, I think, and his house burned. But previous to that he vanished for twenty years, and turned up again, after which he vanished once more, and his house was then destroyed. No *corpus delicti* was established—no part of any human body was discovered in the ruins of that house or elsewhere. I think a wise man would conclude only that his death was not proven." His eyes narrowed and he went on. "But when you say it cannot be, you must have reason. What is it? Have you seen him, then?"

Thus bluntly asked, I outlined briefly my dream experiences.

He listened with grave interest, nodding from time to time. "The description is right," he said when I had finished. "The sound of the man seems right. I am fascinated by your description of his background—more than I can say. Ancient monolithic chambers! What a concept! And surely not of earth."

"How can one rationally explain such dreams?" I demanded.

He smiled wearily. "My boy, how can one rationally explain one's self? Do not ask me."

I took out the map my great-uncle had enclosed with his last letter and spread it before the professor, saying nothing. He looked at it for a long time, following the crude, hastily-drawn lines, gazing intently at the little

squares, those with and those without crosses, and the circles and rectangles. Finally he put a delicate index finger on the map and began to trace it.

"Here," he said, "is Lima. This is the trail into the mountains, to Cuzco, then there to Machu Picchu, and there to Sachsahuaman. There is Ollantaytambo, and along there the Cordillera de Vilcanota. Over here, surely, is Salapunco. The object of the map would be the area beyond; the trail ends there."

"And what region is that?"

"A country largely unknown, and largely uninhabited. It is curious, this map. Right now there is much unrest among the Indians there—the kind of unrest which has no meaning, but which is ever-menacing. He could not have known."

But I knew intuitively that my great-uncle *had* known—how, I could not tell.

And I was certain that I had not come to the wrong place, that my great-uncle's researches were leading him to the right source of the secret world-wide resurgence of the cult of Cthulhu! Somehow I must go into the interior.

"How will I know Andrada when I see him?" I asked.

Professor Andros placed an old photograph of the priest before me. It had been clipped from a newspaper and showed a man of burning, fanatic eyes and mouth, almost grim in appearance—his asceticism and intensity were manifest in every aspect of his features.

"If you go beyond Machu Picchu, take care. You are armed?"

I nodded.

"You won't need guides until after Cuzco. I wish you would keep me informed of your progress. You will find runners at Cuzco, who can travel from your camp with letters which can be sent in the regular way from Cuzco."

I thanked him and returned to my hotel, burdened with books he gave me—books containing transcripts of the *Sussex Manuscript*, the *Celaeno Fragments*, and the *Cultes des Goules* of the Comte d'Erlette—books which contained in their pages the incredible legendry of the Elder Gods and their banishment of the Great Old Ones from Betelgeuse—Azathoth, the blind idiot god; Yog-Sothoth, the All-in-One and One-in-All; Great Cthulhu, said to lie dreaming in his great house in sunken R'lyeh; Hastur the Unspeakable, Him Who Is Not To Be Named, hidden on a dark star near Aldebaran; Nyarlathotep, abiding in darkness; Ithaqua, riding the winds

high above earth; Cthugha, who will return from Fomalhaut; Tsathoggua, waiting in N'kai—all, all waiting upon the propitious time, and upon the activities of their secret servants among men for a return to their dominions—a grotesque lore out of the remote past, but a lore with such an incalculable mass of supporting evidence stretching from the most distant times into the present as to be blasphemously shocking in its suggestiveness. I could well understand my great-uncle's desire to encompass his purpose, and I understood his imperturbability in the prospect of facing death, the casual manner in which he could write of it against the urgency inherent in his desire to do all in his power to ward off the rise of Cthulhu's minions. I read far into the night, long after the hotel was quiet and even the drowsy hum of Lima's night life had subsided.

That night I had the third of the dream visitations of my mentor.

Dr. Shrewsbury appeared as before, heralding his arrival by calling me by name. This time there was no change of scene, but only the single monolithic chamber of the previous dream, with the Doctor's head and shoulders struck out against that weird and impressively unearthly background. He spoke to me at length, warning me to acquaint no one with my purpose in seeking Andrada, urging me to take the utmost care, and, once convinced of the object of my search, not to delay action. The leader of the cult must die, and as much destruction as possible must be wrought in the headquarters of the cult, which was deep in the interior beyond the ancient fortress of Salapunco.

He went on to say to me that my escape from this country would be all but impossible. Yet there was one way in which it might be accomplished. I must wait to go on my trek into the interior of Peru until I found at my disposal three articles, which would be delivered to me within the course of a day or so. These articles were, first, a phial of a golden mead which would render me insensitive to travel in space high over earth; second, a five-pointed star; third, a whistle. The star-stone, he explained, would protect me against the Deep Ones and other minions of Cthulhu, but not against Cthulhu or his body-servants. The whistle would summon to my aid a gigantic flying creature which would transport me to a place where my body would lie in suspended animation for an endless time, while my essence would join Dr. Shrewsbury far across the gulfs of interstellar space. After my purpose had been accomplished, and before the vengeance of the sur-

vivors could be wreaked on me, I was to drink the mead, carrying the star-stone, blow the whistle, and repeat a strange formula—*"Iä! Iä! Hastur! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!"*—and submit to whatever happened thereafter without fear.

Extraordinary as this dream was, what followed it was even more so.

As the dawn approached, I was awakened—so I dreamed—by the sound of great wings. Then, at the window of my room, I saw a monstrous, horrible winged creature; from its back stepped a young man. He entered the room through the window, placed something on my bureau, and went out the way he had come. The winged thing, only a very small part of which I could see, carried him instantly out of sight, the sound of its wings diminishing with great rapidity.

Two hours later, when I awoke, I went doubtfully to the bureau—and there, exactly where I had dreamed—*or had I dreamed it?*—lay three objects—a whistle, a phial of a golden liquid, and a little grey-green star-shaped stone, the exact duplicate of that stone among my great-uncle's collected pieces now reposing in storage in New Orleans!

I shall start into the interior before the day is out.

4

9th November

Dear Professor Andros,

I am encamped in the vicinity of Machu Picchu, and, though I have not been here more than seven hours, I have already happened upon some curiously disquieting facts. It came about through one of the guides who was retained for me through the agency of the fellow Santos whom you recommended. Yesterday, while on the way to the ancient Inca citadel, I stopped some natives along the trail and asked them if they knew the whereabouts of Fr. Andrada. Crossing themselves, they gestured behind them, in the direction we were travelling, but could give me no precise information. However, the guide in question rode up not long after and confessed that he had overheard my inquiry, and that, if I did not fear to leave the trail at Machu Picchu, he would take me to his older brother, who lay ill at his mountain home not far away.

I said I would not be afraid; so, at the appointed place, I rode with him perhaps three miles from the trail we followed, and found his brother as he had described. Both men, I need hardly say, are of Quichua-Ayar stock; the brother, who appeared to me to be dying, was a convert to Catholicism—one of Andrada's—though my guide, a much younger man, was not. Learning that I sought Andrada, he was at first extremely reluctant to speak; but as soon as he understood that I did not personally know Andrada, and that I was not a follower of the priest's, he began to talk rapidly, as if he feared he would not have enough time to tell me what he wished to say.

I cannot reproduce his language here, of course; he spoke in garbled Spanish, and the gist of what he had to say was extremely puzzling. He confessed to a great admiration for Andrada, amounting almost to veneration. But Andrada, he said, was dead. He was "no more as once he had been." Andrada was not Andrada; he was another, whose honeyed words taught evil things. He said he knew where a "paper" from Andrada was concealed, and if I could spare his brother, he would send him there to obtain it for me. It would take two days on foot from this place. Naturally, I assented readily, and the guide has now gone on his mission.

I make haste to report this to you. I do not at the moment know what to make of it, but the old Indian was much agitated, and his sincerity is not to be doubted; moreover, he seemed relieved to be able to tell someone who might understand. I have the opportunity to dispatch this letter by the hands of a party of American tourists who have just completed a guided tour through the Inca ruins. I am, yours cordially,

CLAIBORNE BOYD

10th November

Dear Professor Andros,

My guide returned last night with the "paper" reputed to have been written by Andrada. I have read it, and I conceive it to be of such importance that I am entrusting it to the hand of one of my runners to be taken to Cuzco and mailed to you without further

delay. The paper is evidently but a fragment of a larger account. I am at the moment about to remove my encampment into the gorge of the mountains beyond Salapunco, near which place, I have been told, Andrada is soon to conduct what I understand to be a "revival" or "mission" or some such similar affair. I am, sincerely,

CLAIBORNE BOYD

The Andrada paper in translation.

"... Who this fellow is, or whence he comes, none knows. He is assuredly evil. He plays strange music on ancient pipes resembling flutes. Since he has come there is unrest and wickedness abounding. Everywhere is evil, even in the clouds; and, rising from the waters there are strange sounds—as if great creatures walked in subterranean places. I have inveighed against him, and I shall not cease my endeavours to overcome the evil teachings which are his.

"A great fear is upon my people. They speak to me of evil older than earth, of strange beings, and of one whom they name Kulu or some such name who will rise again out of the sea and become master over all earth, and, in time, over the entire universe. I have questioned some of them as closely as their reticence would permit, and it is not the anti-Christ they fear, but a being 'not a man,' in their words, who was 'old as time' before the teachings of Christ were made known to mankind. One of my people drew a crude picture of this being, as it was handed down to him from his ancestors. I thought I would see a representation of Pachacamac, to whom human sacrifices were made, or of Illa Tici Viracocha—but it was neither of these—though it might have been a drawing of one of the supernatural monsters in which the old Incas had belief. It was a bestial representation of a creature which was a horrible travesty on man—squat, anthropoid, with tentacles and a beard of serpents or tentacles, clawed paws or hands, and winged in some fashion, similar to bats.

"He has come preaching the worship of this being, and predicting his 'return.' I asked my people whether any of them remembered Kulu. None did, but some confessed that their people in past generations remembered. But none had seen him. Many, I felt

sure, concealed their belief in him. It is dismaying to observe this tendency among my people. I shall take steps to drive out this stranger, if need be with the lash. Yet I am not unaware of a strong aura of danger, of mortal menace which abounds everywhere—not the evil of Satanism, but a greater evil beyond that, more primal and terrible. I cannot define it, but I feel that my very soul is in the greatest danger. . . ."

14th November

Dear Professor Andros,

I have seen Andrada—as yet only from a distance by means of my telescope. The guides told me it would be dangerous for me to approach too closely; so I took their advice, set up my telescope, and watched his gathering. The man I saw in the cassock was not the man whose photograph you were kind enough to show me. Yet he was singled out to me as Andrada, and he played the part of Andrada. That is, he harangued the natives gathered to hear him—I should estimate them at three hundred. And certainly his harangue was not a Christian sermon, for he had them groveling. What I found most disturbing was the resemblance between him and the Japhet Smith of my dream; certainly they were not one and the same, I do not suggest it—but it is equally certain that there is a relationship between them, for the Andrada I saw by means of my glass has that curiously batrachian mouth, those lidless eyes, and the strange pasty complexion associated with Smith; nor was there any sign of ears. I think there cannot be any doubt but that Fr. Andrada has been killed, and someone is masquerading as Andrada for a far more horrible purpose than one might believe at first glance. And it is not too much to believe that he is one of the Deep Ones. . . .

Later: One of my native guides, who mingled with the "mission" before Andrada, has returned and tells me that Andrada spoke in a tongue foreign to him, though it awoke something in memory—he says he may have heard it as a small boy. What has seemed to me most illuminatingly conclusive is a sentence he says was repeated over and over as a kind of chant by Andrada, and re-

peated by his listeners. He strove to reproduce it for me, and from his attempts, I have no question but that it was the strange chant heretofore recorded in various places, and always associated with this dread worship—

Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.

which has been translated to read: "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming."

Next morning: Dr. Shrewsbury appeared to me last night, apparently in dream—I put it "apparently" because I am no longer so sure that I am dreaming. I now understand far more of this grotesque and shocking cult-worship. It would appear, from what S. says, that he has made use of certain servitors of Hastur, who oppose Cthulhu's return, to effect opposition in fact to the minions of Cthulhu. Hence, the winged creatures of my previous dream-experience. The mead, it would seem, is a soporific which has more than the ordinary properties of such drugs, but separates the self—the astral or spirit, I suppose one could put it—from the body, which is left inanimate, but living. The body is transported to a place of safety, and the self takes another corporeal form in another place—but not the form of a man—a place far removed from our universe—Celaeno in the Hyades. He is able to communicate with me at will by a kind of hypnosis. . . . Andrada, he says, is as I suspect, but the headquarters of the cult is in a secret place of worship once used by the Incas, an abandoned temple cut into the rock of the gorge not far from our camp. (Andrada survived a previous attempt Dr. Shrewsbury made to destroy the "door" to Cthulhu at that place.) I am going there as soon as it is dusk tonight.

Later: I found the meeting-place. It lay at the end of a flight of steps which began behind a hidden stone door opening into the solid wall of rock out of the gorge—evidently an ancient Incan passage, for the rough-hewn stones were similar to those in Machu Picchu and Sachsahuaman. The place of worship appeared to be an

old temple of some kind, as described, but there was no opening to the sky, contrary to the religious custom. There was, however, a pool of some size—the room itself was of cavernous size, as I should have said at once, capable of holding, I should estimate, several thousand people—and from this pool emanated a hellish subaqueous green light. It would appear that the worshippers gather around the pool, for the ancient altar at the far end of the room has been long in disuse. I did not remain there long, for I was aware of strange stirrings of the water, and the sound of a distant music, as if worshippers were approaching, though, on my emergence from the meeting-place, I saw no one.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

This is perhaps the last you will hear from me.

Learning from one of my guides that an important gathering of some kind was to take place in the old temple room in the gorge tonight, I returned to the spot and hid myself. I had hardly completed my concealment in the recesses of the altar, when there was an ominous stirring and churning of that green-litten water, and something rose to the surface.

What I saw there nauseated me.

One glance sent me reeling backward—that I did not cry out and betray myself was due only to the fact that sight of the monstrosity risen to the surface of that subterranean lake paralyzed my voice. It was such a creature as can be dreamed of only in the wildest dreams of hashish-eaters—a bestial travesty on humanity, a creature that seemed to have been once a man, with tentacles and gills, and a terrible mouth, from which issued a series of eldritch raspings, similar to the distorted notes of a flute or oboe! When I looked again, it had vanished. I thought at once that it had risen in expectation of someone's coming, and I was not wrong—for the sound of footsteps rang down into the cavern, and in a moment someone entered the strange glowing light emanating from the subterranean lake.

It was Andrada—and in that light all those horrible batrachian

characteristics of his features seemed most prominent. Without hesitation, I shot him.

What happened then is almost too incredible to set down. Andrada, mortally wounded, seemed to collapse upon himself. He fell, but the cassock hid him, for he collapsed inside it. *And then there issued from beneath the cassock a horrible, misshapen thing, a mass of convulsed flesh, which slithered and hopped, hopped and flapped toward the water's edge, expiring as it sank out of sight—leaving behind it only sandals, the empty cassock, and the ornaments worn on it!—a thing like a caricature of a frogman, arrested in evolution and moulded together by some master-artist of the terrible!*

Once again the water started to churn, but already I had begun to lay dynamite charges. I did not look back; I lit the long fuse at the entrance to the cavern and ran from that place. I have heard the explosion, and my guides are nervous; I have told them they may return without me, for I know that I have no chance at all of returning along that trail alive. There is left only Dr. Shrewsbury's way. I shall not see you again, and I hope only that this final communication reaches you in time. I know that what I have done is little enough, and much remains to be done in other corners of our world if we are to preserve it from the hideous and malign powers which lie in wait forever, to return again. Farewell.

CLAIBORNE BOYD

5

Lima, Peru. December 7 (AP) . . . Despite an intensive search of the Cordillera de Vilcanota and the region around Salapunco, no trace of the body of Claiborne Boyd has been found. Boyd disappeared in mid-November, while on an expedition to study native customs and cults, according to Prof. Vibberto Andros, whom Boyd visited in this city. The remains of Boyd's camp revealed only that Boyd left without taking his paraphernalia along. An empty

phial was thought to have contained poison, but a chemical analysis of what remained in it revealed it to be only a serum of some kind, not fatal, though tending to paralyze and induce prolonged sleep. Investigators were unable to explain certain widespread marks about the tent, suggesting the marks of bat-wings, greatly enlarged. . . .



BEING THE STATEMENT OF NAYLAND COLUM

(The manuscript of Nayland Colum, discovered in a bottle in Colum's cabin by Captain Robertson of the *Sana,* is preserved in the British Museum; hitherto, publication has been denied, but since certain aspects of the manuscript appear to have bearing on recent events in the South Pacific, the manuscript has been released for publication.)

1

The most merciful thing in the world is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far.

—H. P. LOVECRAFT

THERE IS SO LITTLE time to set down what I must write, to leave this record of the strange events which began in London not so very long ago, so little time because even now the sea and the wind rage around the ship, and we are delivered to *him* because we are in *his* element—if indeed

what I fear is true. I have held and the professor has said that there is no *knowing*, but what after all is truth and what is legend, and which parts of the one rightfully belong to the other.

There are legends which are older than man. How then, did we come by them, if there were not some intelligence apart from man's to bring them down? Man has modified them, changed them, fitted them into his own pattern. But the ancient writings remain, the age-old legends of the human race, the tales, vague and unconnected though they may be, of vast, cataclysmic events, of weird and terrible forces . . . and beings. . . .

It began, as I have written, only several weeks ago in London, though time seems longer than that, so crowded with events was the interval between. My outré novel, *The Watchers on the Other Side*, had not long been published, but it had already achieved that kind of minor success which can come to a novel which is not quite socially-aware enough to be called serious and yet not wholly light enough to be classified as mere entertainment; critics had acclaimed it, book-reviewers had helped it along with mild praise, and the public, sated with the ordinary run of mysteries and puzzle novels, had taken it to their hearts with enthusiasm. I was, in fact, preparing to move from my comparatively humble flat in Soho, when, late one night, I was aroused from my desk, at which I was laboriously trying to piece together a second novel in the same vein, by a cautious knock on my door.

I rose, somewhat tiredly, and opened it to an elderly gentleman whose aspect was kind without being benign, and yet also grim without being menacing. His hair was long and white, but his face was clean-shaven; his nose was strongly Roman, his chin almost prognathous. His eyes I could not see, for he wore dark glasses with shields at the sides, thus completely concealing his eyes. Above his glasses, his brows were unruly and greying.

His voice, when he spoke, was cultured. "I am Professor Laban Shrewsbury, and I am looking for the author of *The Watchers on the Other Side*."

I stepped aside and said, "Come in, please."

"Thank you, Mr. Colum."

He came into my cluttered flat, seated himself, and without preamble, made himself comfortable by throwing back his cape-like coat, exposing a rather old-fashioned high collar and a flowing tie, and, folding his hands about the head of his cane, he began to speak.

"I should perhaps have written to ask whether I might call on you, Mr.

Colum, but time is so short, and it occurred to me that the author of a book like yours would be adventurous enough by nature to understand. Do you mind if I ask you certain questions? Forgive me; I have already observed that you are at work on a new novel, meant to be a successor to *The Watchers on the Other Side;* and that it is not going well, I can guess. But it is just possible that I may be of some slight assistance to you in this regard—though not before some time has elapsed. But I should like now, if you do not object, to ask you a question or two about *The Watchers on the Other Side.*"

"By all means," I said, curiously impressed by my visitor.

"Tell me, did you write that novel out of imagination alone?"

The question was perhaps a natural one. I smiled. "You are paying tribute to my poor skill," I said. "But, of course, the answer is no. I drew upon the ancient legends as much as possible."

"And struck upon the kernel of truth?"

"In legends, Professor?" My smile held, even at the risk of giving offense to him.

"Every legend, all lore, has at basis some truth, however distorted it may be in the process of being handed down from one generation to the next. And there are those strange and provocative parallels in the legends of various peoples. You will have encountered them. But no matter. Tell me one other thing—have you always, since publication of your novel, felt entirely secure as to your person?"

"Of course!" I answered without hesitation, but an afterthought stirred me; there had been evenings. . . .

"I think not," said my visitor with compelling self-confidence. "On several occasions you have been followed—or should I say 'stalked' by stealthy habitants of a world of which you never dreamed save in the fiction which flowed from your pen by such coincidence. You see, I know, Mr. Colum, because on two of those occasions I myself followed your followers. A pity you could not have seen them! You would not have been able to recall their like, and you would not have forgotten the disturbing batrachian aspects of their features and bodies."

I stared at him in amazement. I *had* had the distinct impression that I was being followed on considerably more than one occasion. I had sought to dismiss it as the figment of my over-active imagination, but failed; so I had concluded at last that my followers were from among the dregs of

Whitechapel, Wapping or Limehouse, and this, in turn, had inspired my determination to leave Soho behind.

Quite as if he read my thoughts, my visitor said, "But they would follow you wherever you went, Mr. Colum. I know."

Strangely, I had the inexplicable conviction that he *did* know, that perhaps he alone might provide me with a means of escape.

"I know you are adventurous," he went on. "I know you are possessed of more than ordinary courage. I have some knowledge of your exploits on two exploring expeditions in which you took part. I do not, therefore, come unprepared. But, admittedly, these exploits and your adventurous nature are not sufficient to interest me of themselves; no, but in combination with the fact that it was you, Nayland Colum, who wrote *The Watchers on the Other Side,* these facts are important to my purpose. In a very modest sense, I, too, am an explorer—but my explorations are not of the more mundane kind. I am not concerned with the mysterious and hidden places of the earth except only superficially and insofar as they are connected to the areas outside in which my real interest lies. But there is hidden somewhere on this earth a place I must find, and I have only now settled upon a clue to the keeper of the key to this place."

"In what region is it?" I asked.

"Could I be certain, I would not need to seek it. It might be in the Andes, it might be in the South Pacific, it might be in Tibet or Mongolia, it might be in Egypt or the deserts of Arabia. It might even be in London. But let me tell you for what I am seeking—it is the place of concealment where Cthulhu lies waiting to rise again and spread his spawn over the earth and perhaps its sister planets."

"But Cthulhu is a legend—a creation of the imagination of the American writer Lovecraft!" I protested.

"You say so. So do others. But consider the parallels which exist—the representations of god-like beings of evil which are so strangely similar in the creative life of the natives of Polynesia and the Incas of Peru, the ancient inhabitants of the Tigris-Euphrates valley, and the Aztecs of Mexico—there is no need to go on. No, do not interrupt me."

He went on to speak of legends and ancient lore with a grimly forbidding earnestness and a persuasiveness which aroused, first, my doubts about their unreality, and at last my unwilling belief. He spoke of certain evil cults

which had come down from pre-human eons, surviving in strange, out-of-the-way places, servants of the Ancient Ones—almost inconceivable beings of dread who had fought against the Elder Gods in their far place among the stars of Orion and Taurus, and had been expelled to alien stars and planets—Great Cthulhu, waiting in sleep within some fastness which might be the sunken sea kingdom of R'lyeh; Hastur the Unspeakable, come from the Lake of Hali in the Hyades; Nyarlathotep, the fearful messenger of the Ancient Ones; Shub-Niggurath, the Goat With a Thousand Young, symbol of fertility; Ithaqua, ruler of the air, akin to the fabled Wendigo; Yog-Sothoth, the All-in-One and One-in-All, not subject to strictures of time or space, who was greater than all the other Ancient Ones—all dreaming in hidden places of the time when they can rise again against the Elder Gods and once more rule and command Earth and the sister planets and stars of the universe of which Earth is but an infinitesimal part. He spoke of the servants of the Ancient Ones—of the Deep Ones, the Voormis, the Abominable Mi-Go, the Shoggoths, the Shantaks; of the mysteriously unmapped lands of N'Kai, Kadath in the Cold Waste, Carcosa, and Y'ha-nthlei; of the rivalry between Cthulhu and Hastur and their followers. . . .

And yet, somehow, I understood that he withheld more knowledge than he imparted. I listened in growing wonder, increasingly aware that there was about my visitor a strangely disquieting aspect which was evident even above the almost hypnotic compulsion of his voice and manner, the conviction his bearing and his words conveyed, an intuitively-perceived force which lent weight and authority to his quiet recital. I listened, listened without interruption while he mentioned the old books and mouldering papers which contained the clues to the reality behind the legends—the Pnakotic Manuscripts, the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* of Von Junzt, the Comte d'Erlette's *Cultes des Goules,* the *R'lyeh Text,* and finally the fabulously rare *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred.

He had been speaking of these hidden things, drawing upon some arcana of knowledge which was obviously his own because of an impressive amount of research, for some time, when abruptly he cut himself off in the middle of a sentence. He sat motionless, in an attitude of intent listening.

"Ah," he breathed quietly. Then he rose and took the liberty of putting out the light.

"Do you hear, Mr. Colum?"

I strained to listen in the pregnant darkness. Was it my imagination, or did I hear a curious shuffling sound, almost an uncertain hopping, moving out of the hall beyond my flat and down the steps?

"They have followed me here," said Professor Shrewsbury. "Come."

He moved to a window overlooking the entrance to the building. I came to his side and together we looked down. Out of the building came not one but two strangely hunched figures, who seemed to shuffle and hop along, and passing under a misty light in the street, revealed oddly repellant features, ichthyic, if I were to judge.

"If I were to say to you," whispered Professor Shrewsbury at my side, "that there went two of the Deep Ones, would you still believe that I was the victim of my own wishful imagination, Mr. Colum?"

"I don't know," I answered, likewise in a whisper.

But I knew that what walked away into a London fog below was something incredibly evil; the aura of it seemed even now to linger in the street.

"How did you know they were here?" I asked suddenly.

"I knew it as well as I know this book"—he picked up a book from my desk, despite the darkness, "or this page of manuscript,"—this, too, he picked up, "or this pen. And even now, we have not been deserted, Mr. Colum, by no means. They have no intention of leaving us to our own devices. Perhaps they suspect my purpose, I do not know."

"And what is your purpose?" I managed to ask, somewhat surprised at his uncanny vision in the darkness of an unfamiliar room.

"I need someone like you to accompany me in a search for the Keeper of the Key. I warn you that the course will be fraught with dangers, not only to the body, but to your very soul—that the instructions you will receive are bound to seem mad to you, but yet must be followed to the letter, without question—that we may very well not return."

I hesitated. His challenge was direct and uncompromising. I did not for a moment doubt his sincerity or integrity. Where would he lead me? I wondered.

"We are bound for the port of Aden, Mr. Colum," he said. "But perhaps you would like some further evidence of my ability to see and foresee the dangers which beset us. Pray do not be alarmed, Mr. Colum; my powers are small at best, and yet they may be surprising." He put on the light, and, turning to me, took off his black spectacles.

My shock bordered momentarily on hysteria. The strangled cry that escaped me was lost in a terrified silence, while I fought for self-control. *For Professor Laban Shrewsbury, despite having given me so convincing a demonstration of the excellence of his vision, had no eyes at all; where his eyes should have been there were only the dark pits of his empty sockets!*

Quite calmly, he resumed his spectacles. "I am sorry to have disturbed your equanimity, Mr. Colum," he said quietly. "But you have not yet given me your answer."

I tried to match his calmness with my own. "I will go, Professor Shrewsbury."

"I was certain you would," he answered. "Now listen carefully—as soon as day breaks, you must undertake to secure your possessions against a long absence. We shall take every precaution against loss, but it is quite probable that you will not return for some time—months, perhaps a year, perhaps more. Does that upset you?"

"No," I replied, truthfully enough.

"Very good. We shall set out in two days from Southampton. Can you be ready in that time?"

"I believe so."

"Now I must tell you we have strange allies in our quest, Mr. Colum, and even stranger properties in combat." As he spoke, he took from his pocket a little phial of golden mead, which he pressed upon me. "Guard this carefully, for it has the property, taken in the smallest quantity, of extending the range of all your senses and of enabling your astral self to move about independently in your sleep." Next he gave me a small five-pointed star, which he identified as a kind of amulet which would assure my protection, as long as I carried it on my person, from all such beings as the Deep Ones, though it was powerless against the Ancient Ones themselves.

He went on to add a little stone whistle to the curious things he had already bestowed upon me.

"In many ways, Mr. Colum, this whistle is your most potent weapon. When the time comes that you are in mortal danger, without other escape, if you will take a little of the mead, keep the star-stone in your possession, and blow this whistle, calling forth immediately thereafter these words—*Iä! Iä! Hastur! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtumn, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!*—the Byakhee birds will come and transport you to a place of safety. . . ."

"If the minions of the Ancient Ones are everywhere, what haven is left?" I asked.

"There is one, where we can be safe. And yet we are not there; we are on Celaeno." He smiled tolerantly at my incredulous astonishment. "I do not blame you for thinking me deranged, Mr. Colum. I assure you most solemnly that what I say is the literal truth; Hastur and his minions are not subject to the same laws of time and space which bind us. Their summoning formula is heard, believe me, wherever you may be—and answered."

He paused reflectively and studied my face. "Do you now wish to withdraw, Mr. Colum?"

I shook my head slowly, fascinated against all reason, against my will, against my judgement.

"Can you meet me at Southampton the day after tomorrow? Our ship is the *Princess Ellen;* we set out at nine in the morning."

"I'll be there," I said.

"A sum of money will be deposited to your account before I leave London, Mr. Colum. You will find it sufficient. Pray go on board the *Princess Ellen* even if I am not there; I will join you in good time, and do not be alarmed at my failure to appear, should the hour seem late. Reservations have been made." He hesitated. "And let me impress upon you once more the danger which attends you; believe me, it is never far from you—*they* know, since your book has come out, that you are dangerous to them or may become so."

So saying, he took his departure, and I was left alone with the confusion of my thoughts and the conviction that I stood on the threshold of an adventure stranger than any ever conceived by the mind of man.

2

THE UTTER MONOTONY of the prosaic world of every day seldom impresses itself upon one until the establishment of a sharp contrast affords a comparative basis. There is, too, the very real danger that one may see and understand that the patina of the mundane which overlays all things is but a mask for the constant struggle which goes on unceasingly between recognizable forces of good and the nebulous, almost incredible evil which lies forever in wait just beyond the rim of awareness, lying in wait not only for the

soul of man, but for the world itself, the world and possession of its lands and seas and, beyond that, of the star-spaces and all that lies in the cosmos.

I lay for a long time that night contemplating the things Professor Laban Shrewsbury had said to me, and the even more appalling things at which he had but hinted. The deep hours of night lend themselves well to the eerie, the enchanting, the terrible, but the core of reason, the solid substructure of all the practical knowledge which a man takes in for his first thirty years is not easily set aside by any fund of new and conflicting knowledge. My visitor had been, virtually, little more than a creature of the night; however persuasive his story, I knew nothing of him, though I held in my possession the curious things he had given me.

There were, however, certain avenues of information. My old friend, Henry Pilgore, possessed one of the most comprehensive of reference libraries. Despite the lateness of the hour, I telephoned him, putting in a trunk call to the Somerset village where he lived. He bade me to hang on while he sought out such information as he might have; but I did not have to wait long. Professor Shrewsbury was listed; Pilgore read his biographical sketch—of his home in Arkham, Massachusetts; of his one-time connection with Miskatonic University; of his erratic post-teaching existence; of his apparently wide travels; of his scholarly work, *An Investigation into the Myth-Patterns of Latter-day Primitives with Especial Reference to the R'lyeh Text;* and finally: "He disappeared in September, 1938. Presumed dead."

Presumed dead. The words rang in my thoughts for a long moment. But I could not doubt that, whatever he might be, my visitor had most assuredly been Professor Laban Shrewsbury. What of the things he had left for me? The mead, he had said, had strange properties.

I opened the phial cautiously, touched a drop of it to my finger, and tasted it. It was flat to sweet, ambrosial on second taste, but it gave me no sensation at all, not even one akin to the mild stimulation of weak wine. Disappointed, I replaced the phial, and sat down once more in the darkness of my room. Far away, Big Ben struck two o'clock in the morning; I had but one more day in London, scarcely that, if I meant to be at Southampton docks by nine o'clock of the day following. But now doubts began to assail me; I began to doubt the wisdom of my decision; I began to consider my commitment folly—

And then I became aware of a subtle alteration in my sensory experi-

ence. I was slowly becoming cognizant of a greatly heightened perception on all planes; sounds common to the street outside were clearly heard and accurately interpreted; the smells, the odors and perfumes of the night infiltrating my quarters were made vastly stronger; but at the same time I experienced an even more significant quality of the mead of which I had partaken—my intuitive perception was increased beyond the bounds of what I might have considered possible, increased to such an extent that I became keenly aware of the hidden watchers posted not only in the building, but in the street, and even hundreds of yards away.

For they were there. I cannot say by what marvellous property of the mead I was enabled to see as clearly as if they stood before me the evilly batrachian and ichthyic features of those oddly repellant creatures in the guise of men; but see them I did. And I knew at that moment that everything my visitor had told me was true beyond question, no matter how fantastic his words had sounded. And this realization was fraught with the coldest and most soul-shaking terror, for the limitless vistas of ancient and potent horror, the alien concepts, the monstrous beings which were implicit in the hidden word of Professor Shrewsbury's revelation were paralyzing to mankind.

What happened then is incapable of any logical or scientific explanation.

I passed over into a sleeping state during which I had a most vivid dream, in which I saw myself packing my belongings for the impending voyage, writing a letter to my publisher to explain that I would be away from London for several months, instructing my brother by letter also to handle such affairs of mine as needed care during my absence, and finally slipping away from my quarters in a patent and successful effort to elude my followers. Furthermore, I made my way speedily to Waterloo Station, once I had complied with the formalities incidental to travelling abroad, and entrained for Southampton, where I presently found myself at the docks and on board the *Princess Ellen,* though not without a further frightening shock at the realization that, though I had eluded my London pursuers, I had other similar watchers following me in Southampton.

Now all this, I say, was a dream of the most vivid sort, wholly unlike any dream which I had ever previously experienced. It was so real, in fact, that it seemed to me that the figure in the chair was the dream, and the dream the reality. Or could both have been? I remembered later Professor Shrewsbury's comment about the strange properties of the golden mead, which was cer-

tainly, I am now convinced, no invention of man's, properties never conceived by mankind but brought from some far place, even perhaps, from out of this world, from the hidden places in the cosmos where the Ancient Ones still lurk, waiting forever to return to the paradise from which they were cast out eons ago.

For I woke up not in my familiar Soho quarters, but in my cabin on board the *Princess Ellen,* with Professor Shrewsbury beside me. By what outré powers he possessed behind his formidable black spectacles, he divined the reason for my amazement.

"I see you have sampled the mead, Mr. Colum," he said quietly. He was not angry. "You will then have some appreciation of its properties."

"It was not a dream then?"

He shook his head. "Whatever it was you dreamed was quite true. The mead enabled part of you to separate from its counterpart; you were thus empowered to see yourself doing what you must do in order to fulfil your commitment. Perhaps it was as well that you did try the mead; it gave you the means to understand how closely, indeed, you were being watched and followed, and it lent you furthermore the wit to elude your pursuers. But we shall not be long without pursuit, you may be sure of that."

He waited until I had collected myself somewhat, adjusting to the situation in which I so surprisingly now found myself. Then he continued.

"We are bound for the port of Aden in Arabia, as I told you two nights ago. From Aden we will strike inward either toward the site of ancient Timna, which you may remember from Pliny, who referred to it as the 'city of forty temples'—of what nature, some of them, we may well wonder, or to the region around Salalah, the summer capital of the sultan of Muscat and Oman, in search of a fabulous subterranean city, a buried city, which has been designated as the 'Nameless City' by more than one authority. These are the areas once inhabited by the Hymarites, twenty to thirty centuries ago. In these vicinities we are likely to find the almost legendary Irem, the City of Pillars, which was seen by the Arab Abdul Alhazred, during his sojourn in the great southern desert, the Roba El Khaliyey or 'Empty Space' of the ancients, which is also the 'Dahna' or 'Crimson Desert' of the modern Arabs, and held to be inhabited by protective evil spirits and death-dealing monsters. You will find it increasingly significant that we repeatedly encounter these so-called 'legends' of evil spirits and monsters, particularly

since they are curiously corroborative of the central theses of the Cthulhu myth-pattern, wherever we go and in whatever directions we reach. You will ultimately conclude, even as I did long ago, that this is not coincidence."

I assured him that I had already come to a surprisingly great degree of belief in the astonishing things he had striven to impart to me; manifestly, full belief depended upon such further examination as might be possible for me to make, though I had considerable apprehension as to what the future might hold in store for me.

He went on now to speak of the work of the Arab Abdul Alhazred, the book *Al Azif,* which had become the *Necronomicon.* None other had ever come so close to revealing the secrets of Cthulhu and the cults of Cthulhu, of Yog-Sothoth, and indeed, of all the Ancient Ones; the book, originally secretly circulated after Alhazred's mysterious disappearance and subsequent death in 731 A.D., hinted of things so terrible that the mind of man could scarcely conceive of them, and, conceiving, would instantly elect to reject them rather than adopt into the realm of the possible any potential event of such a nature as to refute many of the most fundamental principles by which the races of mankind exist, and relegate man to a position of even greater insignificance than his present mote-like place in the cosmos. The work, moreover, was of such a nature that all ecclesiastical authorities, regardless of affiliation, condemned it and had so successfully fought the spread by the most rigid suppression that only a very few copies of the Greek and Latin versions of the text were to be had, and these few copies were all under lock and key in various institutions—the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, the British Museum, the library of the University of Buenos Aires, the Widener Library of Harvard, the library of Miskatonic University at Arkham. The Arabic original was lost centuries ago, at about 1228, when Olaus Wormius made his Latin translation of the book.

Professor Shrewsbury had read the entire work in both the Latin and the Greek versions, and he hoped to discover somewhere in Arabia a copy of the Arabic, if not, indeed, the original manuscript, which, he held, had not disappeared but had rather remained in Alhazred's possession, a copy which had been used by Wormius having vanished instead. This was conjecture on the professor's part, but there were sound reasons for such a conclusion, and it began to dawn upon me that possession of this priceless manuscript was doubtless the immediate goal behind the expedition to Arabia. That there

was something more lying in the back of Professor Shrewsbury's mind I could not doubt; and of this he was clearly unwilling to speak, for he gave no hint of its nature. Indeed, it was borne in upon me presently that, however open and above-board Professor Shrewsbury was, there was much left to be desired in his palimpsest of information regarding the Cthulhu Mythos and such adjunctive data as he chose to speak about. What he sought, he confidently expected to find either in Irem or the unidentified "Nameless City," which might be identical with cities at either the site of Timna or Salalah.

At this point he offered me typescripts of certain portions of the *Necronomicon,* and sat waiting patiently while I read, skimming hastily the various papers he had handed me, but reading enough, nevertheless, to understand the significance of the portions he had had transcribed.

> Whosoever speaketh of Cthulhu shall remember that he but seemeth dead; he sleeps, and yet he does not sleep; he has died, and yet he is not dead; asleep and dead though he is, he shall rise again. Again, it should be shown that
>
> > That is not dead which can eternal lie,
> > And with strange eons even death may die.

And more . . .

> Great Cthulhu shall rise from R'lyeh, Hastur the Unspeakable shall return from the dark star which is in the Hyades near Aldebaran, the red eye of the bull, Nyarlathotep shall howl forever in the darkness where he abideth, Shub-Niggurath shall spawn its thousand young, and they shall spawn in turn and take dominion over all wood nymphs, satyrs, leprechauns, and the Little People, Lloigor, Zhar, and Ithaqua shall ride the spaces among the stars. . . .

And yet more . . .

> He who hath the five-pointed stone shall find himself able to command all beings which creep, swim, crawl, walk, or fly even to the source from which there is no returning. . . .

There was far more—oddly disturbing paragraphs concerning the return of the Ancient Ones, the devotion of the minions who served them, some in the guise of men, others in guises far stranger. There were yet more names reaching out from these pages to transfix with primal fear—Ubbo-Sathla, Azathoth, the blind idiot god, 'Umr At-Tawil, Tsathoggua, Cthugha, and yet others, all suggestive of a weird and horrible godhead, of a terror-fraught panoply of great, gigantic creatures, in no wise similar to man, as ancient as and quite possibly more ancient than earth itself, or even the solar system so familiar to the astronomers of our time. Indeed, after I had read some of the pages he gave me, I had little wish to read on, I begged tiredness as an excuse, and handed them back to him.

My companion thereupon bade me to sleep, while he, who apparently had no need of sleep, went on with certain preparations he had yet to make. But before I slept, he took me up on deck, and walked to the rail with me, bidding me only to look about me and observe the water closely. We were not alone in our course, for a school of large fish, which I at first hazarded were porpoises, showed now and then about the ship; but at my mention of porpoises, Professor Shrewsbury only smiled sardonically, and said nothing. It came to me on the edge of sleep soon after that we were not likely to encounter a school of porpoises so little a way out of Southampton; and I knew then, I think, what it was that swam so furtively about the *Princess Ellen,* even if I was reluctant to admit it to myself at first.

And when I slept, I dreamed.

But this time the dreams were of a different calibre from the remarkable waking dream inspired by the golden mead—a curious dream pattern of dreadful and horrible beings, of the Deep Ones who could follow on land or in the water, of great bat-winged creatures flying overhead, of something amorphous and awe-inspiring which lurked deep down in the sea, of vast, sunken continents, of lost, buried cities, ancient as the drifting sand, concealing something of great value in our need, a dream of flight and pursuit, and of an inevitable ending in which there was no escape from the ever more frightful creatures who kept so doggedly upon our trail.

3

I PASS OVER THE remainder of our trip, which was relatively uneventful. True, there was never a day when there was not to be seen something in the sea—a strangely humped back which was not as ichthyic as one would have liked, a shuddersome webbed foot which was horribly like a human hand with its fingers webbed, a terrifying glimpse of a face half-human, half-batrachian, with gleaming basilisk eyes, and a frightful travesty of a mouth slashed across its leather-like skin—but these were only the slightest, most momentary glimpses, and it was difficult to tell how much was actually seen, and how much was imagined out of the strange facts I had confronted. And, since the ship kept serenely on its course, the other passengers gave no sign of having seen anything untoward, it was easy to conclude that what I did see, however disquieting, was grown in large part from a perfervid imagination which, in the circumstances, was understandable enough.

Likewise, our disembarking at Aden was without incident. It was not Professor Shrewsbury's intention to remain in the port city, for, as he explained, the Deep Ones could find us as readily in a port city as on the sea, but were loath to venture far inland, away from water, since this was a necessary element for them, and, while they could sustain themselves for some time without water, a trek into desert country was not an undertaking destined to appeal to them.

"Nevertheless," said the professor with the utmost casualness, "we must expect that other followers will soon be in our vicinity, and we must be prepared for any eventuality."

Guides and porters for our expedition had been arranged for by cable and waited for us farther up the coast, at Damqut. Once we had reached Damqut some days later, it took but a few hours to have all in readiness for our departure. Several times, Professor Shrewsbury examined the streets and alleys of Damqut in the vicinity with marked anxiety, but at last, convinced that there were nearby none other than certain suspicious individuals who might have belonged to the Deep Ones, and who could not harm any possessor of the five-pointed stone, he gave the signal to begin moving from the city.

Our goal was the great unexplored waste of the Rub al 'Khali—Alhazred's "Roba El Khaliye." We were to make first for Salalah, and from

there intended to strike northward toward other potential sites of the Nameless City mentioned by Abdul Alhazred. That my employer had certain definite ideas about the site of the Nameless City, I could not doubt; but he revealed nothing; so we set out, just precisely as many other expeditions had set out before us, by camel caravan, though there had been one period of hesitation during which Professor Shrewsbury had contemplated making an earlier trip to Mareb by air. But, since this would not allow for any divagations from the main line of travel, he discarded the tentative plan.

Of the trip across the desert, from Damqut to Salalah and beyond, I know not what to write. Certainly, the events of that expedition could have been coincidental in their happening; I say they *could* have, but in the light of our purpose, and in that of the intentions of those little-known creatures who sought to prevent our reaching our goal, I do not think they were. On our first night in the desert, we lost one of our guides. Both my employer and I followed his tracks away from camp—he had been running, but his tracks had ceased suddenly; he had literally vanished into the air, leaving no trace of his going. No one had observed him rising from his place in the night. Our second night was uneventful; on our third we lost a porter. This time Professor Shrewsbury and I found the poor fellow's body; we had fanned out beyond the place at which his footsteps stopped, and we found the body almost concealed in sand. A hasty examination showed that he would seem to have been dropped from a singular height, for many of his bones were savagely broken.

We said nothing of his death to the rest of the party, though his disappearance, added to the guide's, spread uneasiness among the men. Desertions were not at all uncommon; the guide's vanishing had been accepted as a desertion, without question; the porter's had taken place too far from Damqut, and yet we were still on well-travelled roads, and the theory that he had deserted satisfied some of the men. But the uneasiness which had taken root among them was by no means confined to them, nor was it alone due to the loss of two of their number. I myself had felt it; a succession of events quite apart from the disappearance of the two men stirred it beyond my ability to suppress it.

The most curious event was not, in final analysis, the vanishing of our men. It was the intolerable conviction of being watched by invisible watchers. This was naturally most strong at night, but we were never without it

even under the glaring sun, and by day it was accompanied by strange hallucinations, reported by guides and porters alike—of slithering creatures, resembling crocodiles, darting about at a little distance from our caravan, and manifestly following us. These could very easily have been desert animals, which could have grown into the habit of following caravans, except for the fact that they were not identifiable as native animals of any kind, they were of varying size, some of them but a few inches long, some many feet in length, and pronouncedly reptilian, and, finally, that some of them appeared to be garbed in unrecognizable costumes, sight of which only served to further excite the members of our caravan.

These strange creatures would seem to have been at last half unreal, for they appeared and disappeared with such agility that more than once they seemed to vanish before our eyes. They were very probably not malign; none ever approached too closely to the camp or caravan, and all vanished at once on movement toward them. Professor Shrewsbury shot at them several times, but with astonishingly ill effect; he struck none of them, though there were times when he could hardly have missed. Yet he did. Their following had an unusual effect on my employer; far from becoming uneasy at their presence, he seemed actually to enjoy having them near us, and plagued the men constantly as to their numbers, had they noticed any increase, and the like.

We were perhaps seventeen days out of Damqut, and already well past Salalah before any increase in the numbers of our unusual companions was reported. By that time we had lost in all six men, and those who remained were becoming extremely restive. This was not alone because of the dwindling number of the men on the expedition, but because, as their spokesman pointed out, we approached a forbidden and accursed region of the country, one which all Arabians shunned in mortal fear.

My employer, however, was blind to any appeal. He confided that he had expected rebellion, and that this in itself was an excellent sign, for the writings of Abdul Alhazred were specific in that the region of the Nameless City was shunned by the natives. His adamance before the entreaty of the men that he alter his course was strengthened by the occurrence of an even more significant event, though its significance was lost on me at first.

It was late that night when my employer woke me. He was unusually excited.

"Come," he whispered.

I went with him, wonderingly.

He knelt down just outside the tent and held his hand, palm down, above the surface of the sand.

"Feel," he commanded.

I did so, and was aware, as I had already been aware about my ankles, of the movement of an ice-cold current of air flowing steadily across the surface of the sand.

"Do you feel it?" he asked.

"The wind? Yes. What is it?"

"Alhazred's 'spectral wind.' There is an account of it in the *Necronomicon.* There is yet another in the writings of the late H. P. Lovecraft. Both pertain to the same source—the Nameless City. From which direction does it come?"

"Almost due north."

"That will be our route tomorrow. We will not feel the wind by day, but at night we will know it again. If we follow it, it will lead us to our goal. Then our real work begins, Mr. Colum—only then. And I am very much afraid that you and I will be quite alone at it; so it will behoove us to make sure of our camels and such supplies as are absolutely essential to the two of us for the trip back to Salalah."

We turned away from the direction of the border of Oman next morning, and struck out toward the heart of the Rub al 'Khali. There was much muttering among the men; many dark scowls came out upon their faces and remained there throughout the day. But they were still with us by nightfall, whatever their fears. Too, there were with us an increasing number of our strange desert companions, but these showed a curious aversion to the oasis at which we encamped for the night.

Once again, in the night, my employer sought the "spectral wind" and found it, much stronger now, with sufficient velocity to ripple our tents. But he and I were not the only members of the party to be aware of it. In a very short time after it had begun to blow, which was not long after sundown, the men had become cognizant of it, and, feeling it, they gave vent to such a bedlam of complaint, that Professor Shrewsbury was compelled to talk to them, which he did in Arabic, explaining to me later what it was that had passed between them.

"We cannot go on," the leader of the men had said.

"Why not?"

"Feel. It is the death wind."

"I feel it. Will you remain here while Mr. Colum and I go on?"

The leader consulted the men, who were divided in their opinions. Nevertheless, he believed that the majority of them would stay.

"Very well." Professor Shrewsbury turned to me. "We'll take that special equipment I have, lash it securely to a camel, and make our own camels ready. You and I will go on now; the wind began approximately two hours after sundown, travelling much faster than you or I can travel. Nevertheless, if we make haste, we should reach its source before dawn, for it will return the way it came."

Within an hour we were moving through the limitless desert, into the wind out of the north. We travelled as speedily as our camels allowed us to, Professor Shrewsbury completely confident of reaching his goal at or before dawn. The night was not hot, but the wind into which we rode was an Arctic wind, utterly alien to the desert, and redolent with unfamiliar odors and fragrances. Stars were myriad in the heavens; small wonder that Arabs were among the earliest known astronomers! Yet I could not help wondering, looking up at them, whether indeed there lay in those star-spaces the colossal beings of the mythology about which my employer had spoken—the Elder Gods, the Ancient Ones, whose very struggle did indeed parallel the ancient legends of mankind, even before the setting down of the banishment from heaven of Satan and his followers.

Shortly after midnight, the wind changed its course. It was indeed returning, even as Professor Shrewsbury had predicted it would, for now it swept northward, rapidly gaining momentum and force. Nor did it diminish in velocity until just before dawn, when there occurred a perceptible slackening of its vigor. By this time I was exceedingly tired, but Professor Shrewsbury urged his camel onward, confident that the site of the Nameless City lay not far ahead.

Nor was his confidence misplaced, for shortly before the oddly cold wind died away, he gave a shout and pointed ahead to what seemed to be a solitary stone in the expanse of sand over which the sun was soon to rise blazingly. I could have known by the electrifying aura of malignancy which had descended upon me that we had come at last to the goal which Profes-

sor Shrewsbury had sought; here indeed was a hidden city, and the occasional stones which were revealed so fleetingly by the shifting sands, spoke somberly of a civilization ancient before the Christian era had begun.

I wondered how my employer hoped to descend into this hidden city. He had certainly no chance whatsoever of penetrating to its street level by means of the picks and shovels we had brought; for manifestly the city was buried too deeply. But this problem concerned me only briefly, for Professor Shrewsbury made no effort to dismount; instead, he followed the now fast failing wind, urging his camel anxiously forward, until he outdistanced me, leaving me still threading my way among the pinnacles of that buried ruin. When at last he dismounted, he was considerably ahead of me; I found him beside a cavernous opening, skillfully hidden among the sands.

As I too dismounted, the last of the wind died away, hushing around my feet into the opening, which led down sand-covered steps. Out of it yawned an obliterating blackness, and from it rose a coolness which spoke of moisture below. But Professor Shrewsbury was already unloading the third camel, which had been tied to my own and had hindered my keeping up with my employer.

"Is this the place?" I asked.

"This is the place," he answered confidently. "I know, because I have been here."

I gazed at him in perplexity. "But why, then, this search?" I asked.

"Because I have never come over land, but only by air. Come, let me show you."

He led the way down the steps. From the desert, which was already extremely hot in the rays of the rising sun, to this cool cavernous place was a step as from tropical to sub-Arctic regions; moreover, the air grew even cooler and more damp as we descended, and it was borne in upon me presently that, once the initial sequence of stone steps had been descended, we were in a kind of natural cavern, which lay, because of the steep, staired declivities over which we passed, far deeper beneath the sands than we might otherwise have imagined. Perhaps at some time it had been crowned by a superstructure, long since destroyed; but now it shone and glowed eerily in the beams of my employer's flashlight.

I was struck almost at once by the evidence all around us of the ancient

civilization which had once held sway here. Though many side passages led into the various rooms of the central cavern, all were far too low to permit of a man's standing upright; but wherever altars occurred—and it was patent that the cavern had been used as a temple—they were suggestively low, as if they were made for creatures which crawled rather than walked upright. The stone roof of the cavern had been worked on by stonecutters; and primitive artists had decorated the walls, which were filled with the most horribly disquieting drawings, depicting not man but the events of a history in which none but saurian and reptilian creatures took part—the very same, I concluded with disturbing reluctance, as those crocodile-like beings which had watched the approach of our caravan from afar and accompanied us to the oasis where the remainder of our expedition still waited.

My employer, however, appeared to have a further goal in view, for he walked rapidly from room to room in the cavern until he came to the end, and there he went around the altar and disclosed a stone door carved from the rock of the wall. This he opened with ease, revealing yet another flight of steps, a steep declivity leading down into hideously repellant depths, from which rose a kind of fetor not unpleasantly spiced with odors suggestive of incense. Without hesitation, Professor Shrewsbury plunged into the gloom of that endless passage—for indeed, it was endless; our descent took over two hours, for the passage altered height, so that it was necessary from time to time to walk with the utmost care. We descended from level to level, until it seemed to me that we must indeed be inconceivably far below the surface of the earth at that place.

Yet at last we reached a level floor, at first in a place where neither of us could quite stand upright, but presently, by dint of shuffling along, through a widening corridor in which, much to my astonishment, there were wooden cases with fronts of a substance akin to glass and yet not glass—but these were clearly cases which had never known the hand of man, artful in construction, coffin-like in size, and affixed to the walls and along the floor of the passage. My employer went from one to another of them, eagerly, and at last stopped before one of them with a long, low sigh.

He turned his flashlight full upon it and beckoned me forward.

"Do not be surprised at what you see, Mr. Colum," he cautioned me.

I do not know what I expected to see, but what I did see could hardly

have been any more startling. For certainly the last thing I expected to see beneath the pseudo-glass of the case was the body of a young man of my own time, surely of approximately my own age, and, if his clothing were any criterion, either an Englishman or an American, with the balance in favor of the latter.

"Is this, too, a dream or an illusion?" I cried.

"No, Mr. Colum, it is not," answered Professor Shrewsbury. "Nor is this one—nor this."

"Good God! Three of them. How did these corpses come here?"

"Ah, they are not corpses."

"But they are surely not alive!"

"Pray remember Alhazred's inexplicable couplet—'That is not dead which can eternal lie, And with strange eons even death may die.' No, they are not dead; but, paradoxical as it may seem, they are not alive either. They are deposited here to wait for that time when their life essence, their souls, their astrals—name it what you will—are brought back. For this is the secret of the Byakhee birds; they do not fly to Celaeno, but here, to this domain of Hastur, where the bodies of these young men are thus preserved. Soon now they themselves will return from Celaeno, and together all of us will make the final journey of this incredible search which has now come to the threshold of the secret."

I thought of what he had said, recalling his words about the Byakhee and their response to the stone whistle I carried in my pocket. But where, then, were they? I put my question into words.

"Some of them may be here. But they are in Kadath in the Cold Waste, on the shunned Plateau of Leng, and in certain other places, some within our own plane, some existing conterminously on another plane."

"And who are these young men?"

"The first one is Andrew Phelan; he helped me in Arkham. The second is Abel Keane; he, too, was helpful—at Innsmouth. The third is Claiborne Boyd, who undertook a strange mission to Peru."

"And the fourth will be Nayland Colum," I cried.

"Let us hope not," said my employer fervently. "If we succeed here, it should no longer be necessary to take such means to escape pursuit."

"You knew they were here," I charged. "How?"

"Because I, too, was one of them for a while—and even before any of them came here, I spent almost twenty years in such a case. I am far older than you would believe, Mr. Colum—if we add those two decades." He turned away. "But it is not our purpose to linger here. We must go on, yet further. There are crypts below into which I have never seen."

He paused only long enough to add to my burdens a share of his own, which were becoming too heavy for him; then he went on, and again we descended narrow stone steps, again we crouched and crawled through narrower passages, moving from one level to another. How far we went into the bowels of the earth, I have no way of knowing; by the light on my watch, I saw that the hour was already well past noon, though I felt, strangely, neither hunger nor thirst.

Far down, near the end of the passage, the walls revealed arresting paintings of the utmost and most extravagant grotesquerie. Here there were set down a sequence of scenes which must have depicted the Nameless City in its distant past, though it seemed most peculiar that the scenes of the city were consistently done as by moonlight, so that they were elusively spectral in their effect. A scrutiny of the pictures, however, revealed a secret, hidden world, subterranean beyond question, where great cities flourished amidst high mountains and fertile valleys; this country existed side by side with the moonlit monoliths of the Nameless City, shown now in decadence, with the sacred reptiles dying away, and their spirits hovering above, while ornately robed priests cursed the waters and the air. One terrible final scene showed an emaciated group of the saurian inhabitants of the Nameless City setting upon and tearing apart a human being. Beyond this point, however, the grey walls and ceiling were devoid of all ornamentation, for which I was understandably grateful.

We came at last to a great bronze door upon which was set an inscription in Arabic, which my employer translated aloud: "He who came, hath returned. He who saw, hath been blinded. He who set down the secrets, hath been silenced. Here he shall abide forever, neither in darkness nor the light. Let none disturb him." He turned to me, his excitement obvious even in the darkness of the room. "Can it be other than the Arab Alhazred?" he demanded. "For he alone came, saw, and set down the secrets."

"He was killed."

"Tortured and slain, beyond question," agreed Professor Shrewsbury calmly. "Legend has it that he was snatched by an invisible monster in broad daylight and devoured horribly before a great audience; this is the story the twelfth-century biographer Ebn Khallikan, hands down; but it is more than possible that the devouring was an illusion and that he was brought here to undergo punishment and death for his temerity in revealing the secrets of the Ancient Ones. Come, we are going in."

The bronze door resisted our efforts for some time, but at last it gave, opening into a small, square room, which was barren of all furnishing with the exception of a squat stone sarcophagus in the center of the room. Professor Shrewsbury advanced upon this without hesitation and moved back the lid, disclosing tattered remnants of clothing, a few fragments of bone, and dust.

"Is it he?" I asked.

My employer nodded.

"And we have come all this way for this?"

"Not alone this, Mr. Colum. Be patient. What follows now informs us whether we succeed or fail. Tell me, you still have the mead?"

"Yes."

"Take but a little of it."

I followed his example.

"And now pray compose yourself. He will need to draw upon you for his coming."

Drowsiness was already coming upon me. Under Professor Shrewsbury's guidance, I stretched out on the floor near the sarcophagus, and almost immediately experienced a dream similar in character to that first mead-inspired dream in my Soho quarters. Once again I saw myself taking part in a drama, this time far more outré than that other, which had been prosaic enough in essence.

I watched Professor Shrewsbury encircle the sarcophagus and both of us with a large band of blue powder, which he immediately set afire. This burned eerily but brightly, so that the entire room was illumined, and the sarcophagus stood out in high relief. My employer then constructed a series of cabalistic designs on the floor about the sarcophagus, again completely encircling it. Thereafter he took from his person certain documents which resembled those transcriptions from the *Necronomicon* he had given me to read, and from one of them he recited in a clear voice:

"Him who knows the place of R'lyeh;
him who holds the secret of far Kadath;
him who keeps the key to Cthulhu;
by the five-pointed star, by the sign of Kish, by the assent of the Elder Gods, let him come forth."

This he recited three times, at each adjuration completing a drawing on the floor. At the conclusion of his recitation, he waited. Now there occurred a most unusual and slightly disturbing phenomenon. I felt myself surrendering something of myself, as were I drained of my very life-force, and at the same time there was a movement above the sarcophagus, at first little more than a stirring of air, then a gradual misting, and then before my eyes the remnants and tatters of clothing in the sarcophagus began to lift up into the air and take ragged shape about the misting which was growing steadily denser, losing its opacity for darkness, so that presently there hung above the sarcophagus a spectral image, a blasphemous caricature of a man, which had neither body nor face, but only a semblance of each, with black, glowing pits where eyes should have been beneath a torn burnous and a dark shapeless body, very thin, upon which the tatters of garments which long ago were flowing robes hung loosely. This terrifying apparition hung in the air, motionless.

Professor Shrewsbury addressed it. "Abdul Alhazred, where is Cthulhu?"

The spectre raised a sleeve and indicated its mouth. There was no tongue; it could not speak.

Professor Shrewsbury was not daunted. "Is he at R'lyeh?" And, receiving no immediate answer, he mouthed these unintelligible words: *"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagen,"* which, I understood later, was a ritual phrase meaning, "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming."

This time, however, the apparition nodded just perceptibly.

"Where is R'lyeh?"

Once again the horrible revenant of Abdul Alhazred pointed to its tongueless mouth.

"Construct a chart on the ceiling," directed Professor Shrewsbury.

The apparition thereupon went through the motions of drawing a meticulously conceived chart upon the ceiling. Since it had nothing with which to draw, it could not make a mark of any kind; yet, so potent was the

effect of the mead, it was manifest that Professor Shrewsbury followed the labored movements with ease, copying them on a piece of paper as the spectre drew them.

There emerged presently a complicated map which represented no known portion of the earth, but I understood, as my employer did, that Abdul Alhazred's conception of the earth was perhaps vastly different from our own, and that his reconstruction of any portion of the earth's surface was dependent upon the limited knowledge of his time, to which he might have added such private knowledge as he had amassed through methods which had gained him sufficient information to enable him to put together the *Al Azif.*

Having finished his drawing, Professor Shrewsbury held it up before the apparition he had summoned from the gulf.

"This is the place?"

The apparition nodded.

"And of these islands, which is the one above R'lyeh?"

The spectre indicated a tiny dot on my employer's map, then made a cryptic gesture which Professor Shrewsbury immediately understood.

"Ah, it sinks and returns."

The spectre once again inclined its head.

Professor Shrewsbury was manifestly now satisfied with this interrogation, and he now turned to the subject which I had felt all along lay in the back of his mind.

"Tell me, Alhazred, where is the lost *Al Azif?*"

There was no immediate reply to the professor's query; the apparition remained motionless for several seconds; then its head made a slow half-turn, which might have been a negative gesture or simply an attempt to see something invisible to other eyes.

"Is it in this room?" pressed my employer.

The spectre nodded.

"Is it in the sarcophagus?"

The spectre shook its head.

The professor glanced rapidly around. There was no place of concealment save in the walls or floor.

"The walls?" he hazarded.

Again his guess was confirmed.

"On the south?"

No.

"On the north?"

No.

"The east?"

Yes. But now the apparition seemed to be trying to say something more in its eerie fashion; the pathetic, tongueless figure, eyeless, too, for eyes and tongue had been removed before death in the torture inflicted upon the mad Arab for his temerity in writing about the secrets of the Ancient Ones and their minions, appeared to wish grievously to say something of significance.

The professor, seeing, tried to draw it out. Was it about the manuscript? A quick nod. Was the manuscript guarded? Yes. Were the guards here? No. Were they below? Yes. That was all? No, there was yet more. The manuscript was not complete? Yes, that was it. Some of it had been destroyed before Alhazred could conceal it? Yes.

"I will take what is left," said the professor. "Return now whence you came, Abdul Alhazred."

Immediately the tatters and the bone fragments fell together and collapsed; the mist settled like dust and vanished; the blue fires around the sarcophagus began to dim and die away. At the same time strength flowed back into me, the professor rose from his knees, to which he had descended to copy that fantastic drawing constructed in the air against the ceiling, and closed the sarcophagus.

Then he strode to my side and shook me.

"Hurry now, Mr. Colum," he whispered. "We have what we want; there is no time to be lost."

We began then to examine the east wall of the room for the stone concealing the fragments of the manuscript of the *Al Azif.* It would be low, the professor reasoned, for the Arab would unquestionably have been bound or chained in some manner, and his ability to reach far up along the wall would have been curtailed. My employer worked with feverish haste, pausing from time to time to listen, so that it seemed we were examining the great stones for a long time before we came upon one loose enough to serve as a place of concealment. Yet we had not been long, and behind the stone we found the

parchment pages of the *Al Azif;* these Professor Shrewsbury hastily thrust into his coat. Then we replaced the stone, and together left the room, closing the great bronze door behind us.

For a moment more, Professor Shrewsbury stood at the threshold listening, his head cocked a little toward the stygian darkness at our right, the great maw of blackness which hinted of still further mystery beyond the place to which we had come.

It was then that the sound began. Hitherto, the only noise which had reached our ears was the thin scuttering of sand borne along on the wind at the steps leading down from the desert above; but this had ceased soon after our advance into the nether regions, and we ourselves were then the authors of the only sounds, pertinent to our descent, which we heard. But now, emanating from some dread crypt even farther below, there swelled and grew a sound which can only be described as a low moaning, accompanied by a rushing as of a night wind—a moaning as of many voices, but, what was most hideously suggestive, the voices had a totally non-human quality impossible to describe, save only as a sound fraught with the uttermost horror.

I saw by my watch that the hour of sundown was near, and felt at the same time the beginning once again of the "spectral wind," which manifestly came from far deeper than the subterranean caverns into which we had penetrated. I felt an overpowering urge to take flight and yielded to it; but Professor Shrewsbury soon caught hold of me and stopped my precipitous escape.

"Wait," he urged, "we cannot outrun it. With the stones we are safe. Let us take refuge in a side passage until the worst of the wind has exhausted itself."

We accordingly crawled into one of the low auxiliary passages leading off from the main corridor, and lay there in silence, with our flashlights turned off. There was soon apparent in the corridor which we had left a kind of grey illumination, not light, but a kind of emanation from the walls, so that it was possible to descry the farther wall, and to make out other passages leading away from the central corridor. Then the wind came; it came in a furious blast, accompanied by a mounting bedlam of voices, which sounded like a distant outcry of screams and curses, of ululations and agonized wails, riding the wind. And, as I stared fixedly outward, it seemed to me that the wind itself bore along with it countless faces, saurian, reptilian,

batrachian, all bewailing their bondage to the crypts below the Nameless City; they flowed past in a never-ending stream, their brute mouths open in their outcry against this fate which doomed them forever to ride the terrible spectre wind, whose Arctic temperature penetrated to where we lay and chilled to the bone.

Whence came they? From what vast underground reaches did the wind rise to sweep forth nightly upon its round over the desert places which few human feet ever trod? And by what accursed sorcery were they so bound to this inferno of darkness? Was it indeed that the drawings on the walls told in truth of the decay and ending of that ancient civilization which had stood long before the time of man, and that there was somewhere still deeper in this earth such a subterranean paradise as that depicted on the walls—a paradise in which there was light as of sunlight, and in which the gardens and valleys were fertile beyond the dreams of men who walked upon the desert above? Or was it that this paradise had in its turn fallen before the invaders who had conquered the Nameless City, the minions of some hellish being perhaps worshipped, perhaps unknown among the dwellers of that place?

The wind's icy fury, added to the cacophony of the terrible voices, made a shocking clamor in this enclosed place; it rang deafeningly, so that I had perforce to clap my hands over my ears lest I suffer the bursting of my eardrums. Professor Shrewsbury did likewise, and together we lay so for half an hour or perhaps more, before the shrieking blast of the wind had passed beyond our place of concealment, leaving only a steady, unhurried flowing of cold air moving to the surface above.

"Now," said my employer. "But be careful. I could not say what guardians may have been placed at the tomb of Alhazred."

The ascent to the desert place where the shifting sands hid the face of the Nameless City was interminable. From time to time, my employer stopped and turned his sightless eyes back to face that darkness with his own. Now and then I thought, I could not be sure, that I heard scuffling sounds, as of hidden pursuers, but Professor Shrewsbury said nothing, only hurrying faster to mount the precipitous stairs toward the uncertain haven of the starlit desert far overhead. The caverns and corridors rang with our footsteps, the icy wind whipped around our ankles, the dwindling voices still sounded with a ghost-like insistence from far ahead of us, from out on

the desert where they scattered and were diminished over the sands before being drawn in once more and consigned again to that waiting place deep down below.

There was soon no doubt but that there were pursuers behind us, but of their nature I had no conception. My employer did not seem unduly disturbed, but I observed that he urged me to hasten and himself forged ahead with increased haste, murmuring that our camels might have been frightened by the wind and gone off, that our guides and porters would most certainly have begun to despair of us, for it was now the second night since our departure from the camp at the oasis where first we had become aware of the wind. By this time, too, I was unbelievably weary and exhausted, not having slept for more than forty hours, and feeling the need acutely, because I could no longer seem to distinguish between the reality all around me and the illusion of sights and sounds into which I found myself falling with increasing frequency.

But at last we reached the surface, and, though our camels were not immediately to be seen, they were not far away. They had evidently taken fright at the voice of the wind, and had moved away from the mouth of the pit, from which a little whirlpool of sand still came in the wind, and out of which, doubtless, at the height of the blast from below, a veritable sandstorm must have risen. My employer seemed now possessed of an almost unseemly haste; he leapt upon his camel as soon as the beast had knelt for him, and urged the creature forward with brisk commands. The course we had to follow was clearly indicated by the direction of the wind, which was certain to lead us to the oasis below the Nameless City, even as it had led us on the previous night to the site of the city itself.

As before, the night was dark; the glittering stars were partially hidden by clouds which rode high over; the desert shone with a kind of macabre glowing, as from some dark inner light which had only a spectral reality; and there was no sound beyond the sounds our camels made and the hushing of the wind, now a steady movement to the south. From time to time, Professor Shrewsbury cast glances backward, but if he saw anything in the starlit expanse behind us, he gave no sign. Yet there was an undeniable aura of fear which rode with us; it could not be gainsaid that our invasion of the tomb of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred, had loosed forces beyond our power to foresee, and, too, the warning against molestation of the remains in the sarcophagus had been unmistakable, even though my employer had remained

undaunted in the face of it. Clearly, if there were nothing in the desert between the Nameless City and ourselves, Professor Shrewsbury expected something to be there or to come from that shunned ruin so seldom trodden by the foot of man, for his attitude bespoke his fear—not of the minions of the Ancient Ones, for he feared them not, but of the powers which the Ancient Ones themselves could command and send forth to do their bidding.

Once there was a ghastly ululation far behind us, like a creature baying on our trail—but that sound came from no throat known to mankind; and at its sound the professor pressed his camel still more, and the beast itself, as if aware of an eldritch horror behind it, became more animated and heeded its driver. Yet, despite the manifest chill of the fear of unknown horror, we reached the camp at the oasis without incident. There we found that our guides and porters had deserted to a man, but they had providentially left behind them enough provisions to see us once again safely back in Salalah or Damqut.

That we did eventually reach Damqut seems to me now in retrospect evidence that, if we were being pursued, as I am convinced we were, we were also under a protection other than that afforded us by the grey five-pointed stones bearing the seal of the Elder Gods. It was on our fourth night out of the oasis below the Nameless City that I caught sight of something that flew between us and the stars. My employer was immediately apprehensive, but his sightless eyes through the strange power he had enabled him to identify our winged companions, for they flew ever in our vicinity.

"The Byakhee," he murmured, after an examination of the skies. "I had thought some of them must be in the vicinity of the Nameless City. For one moment, I feared it might be the Wind-Walker, Ithaqua, against whom I am afraid our talisman would be of no avail. But no—if these are here, there are others."

"Who follows us?" I asked.

"The dwellers of the city," he answered enigmatically.

"But there were no dwellers in the Nameless City," I protested.

"I thought you saw them rising from the gulf?"

"Those drawings—were they real?" I asked.

"Oh, yes—there was a civilization in that place which antedates mankind. Saurian and reptilian—followers of Cthulhu. I thought you had

understood—the Nameless City was at one time a sea city, buried far under the ocean's surface eons ago, long before the upheaval which brought that portion of Arabia to the surface and sent the waters away, leaving the aquatic inhabitants of that world to die out of their element beneath the blazing sun which followed the cataclysm."

"What cataclysm?"

"I have no doubt it was the same which sank the lost continents of Atlantis and Mu. And that in turn may well have been the Deluge of the Christian Mythos. I assure you, Mr. Colum, there are many disturbing and provocative accounts in the ancient books which are oddly corroborative of the oldest legends, persisting in one form or another from generation to generation. So the followers of Cthulhu perished here, save for those at the lowermost depths, which give rise to water still, and also to the icy wind which courses upward to the desert and returns. There they are still, but of such nature that they are no longer subject to all our dimensional laws and pursue us in that same apparitional shape we saw before reaching the Nameless City."

Thereafter I watched for those curious saurian creatures, and indeed, they were all around us, appearing and disappearing with uncanny facility, offering us no difficulty beyond cutting off our third camel with some of our provisions, a loss which was somewhat alleviated by our purchase of provisions from a caravan encountered halfway to Salalah en route to Oman. What happened to the beast, we did not know; it had been cut off during the night, but our own camels were unmolested, perhaps because they were closer to us than the third beast had been.

The Byakhee were visible on three nights between the oasis near the Nameless City and the port of Damqut. But they shunned civilization and its cities. Yet it was in the cities and along the coast that my employer most feared the menace of pursuit, and immediately upon reaching Salalah, he made an accurate copy of the precious map, and posted it to an address in London, following it with a second copy, posted to an address in Singapore, both to be held pending his arrival. The fragmentary manuscript, however, he retained on his person. Having done this, he faced the remainder of our trip with greater equanimity, though he was under no illusions as to the nature of our voyage.

And in this, certainly, he was not unduly pessimistic. For, though our

journey from Damqut to Mukalla and finally Aden was comparatively peaceful and without the alarms which might have been anticipated, the voyage from Aden into the Red Sea on our way to the Suez and the Mediterranean, was beset with all manner of difficulties. Almost at once, Professor Shrewsbury observed that the dockworkers busy loading the ship on which we had taken passage, the *Sana,* appeared to be curiously deformed, so that the majority of them gave the aspect of hopping and shuffling at their work rather than of walking in orthodox fashion. It was not too noticeable; undoubtedly most passersby who glanced at them saw nothing; but to a trained observer like my employer, the significance of the dockworkers' traits was not lost. It was possible, he explained, that their presence was nothing more than a coincidence; in Massachusetts, certain coastal towns harbored a surprising number of the descendants of a horrible experiment in crossbreeding between the natives and the Deep Ones; such experiments need not be considered to have been confined to one area of the globe, for these dockworkers strongly resembled certain residents of Innsmouth, Massachusetts, and the hill country around Dunwich, where other hybrid peoples once flourished.

But the dockworkers offered us no difficulties, and it was not until we were well out of Aden on our way up the Red Sea that my employer became conscious of the nature of our pursuit. He came to my cabin only last night, in marked agitation.

"You saw them?" he asked without preamble, referring to aquatic pursuers.

I nodded.

"The Deep Ones, certainly," he said. "But there is something more. Listen."

At first I heard nothing but the sound of the ship's passage; then, slowly, insidiously, I became aware of another sound, one that should not have been out on the sea, the shuddersome sound of ponderous steps moving through a great depth of swampy or boggy soil, distant treading and sucking sounds.

"You hear?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"It is something other than the Deep Ones, something against whom our armor is too weak. You have the golden mead and the whistle? You remember the formula?"

I assured him that I did.

"Be prepared to use them. But the time is not yet."

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

It is now late in the following day. Early this afternoon a storm brewing from our rear burst upon us, and its fury has been mounting steadily ever since. Wind, lightning, thunder, and torrents of rain have engulfed the *Sana,* and the violence of the storm appears to be mounting. I have set down this account specifically so that such of my effects as are held in London will continue to be held pending word of my death, for my employer assures me that the time for that is not yet. He has made it clear, too, that it would seem to be a matter of making our escape or of permitting the needless sacrifice of everyone on board the *Sana,* which he intends to prevent.

Professor Shrewsbury has just looked in to say that it is time. He had taken some of the golden mead, he has his whistle ready. I can see him from where I sit writing, I can hear him shouting into the storm, *"Iä! Iä! Hastur! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!"* He stands upright against the fury of the storm, he falls back only before a lashing tentacle from the deep below.

And then the birds. Great God! what beings! What spawn of some forgotten hell!

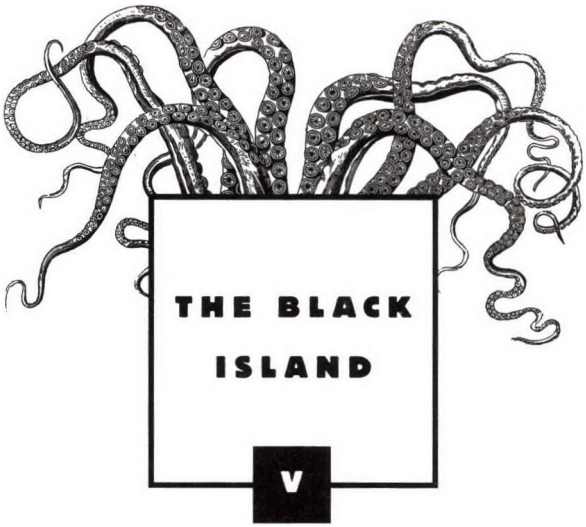
But he mounts one of them, unafraid.

Something thrusts hard against the ship, something comes just too late to seize its prey.

I know what I must do. . . .

From the Log of the *Sana:*

> The storm of Friday caused the loss of two passengers, Professor Laban Shrewsbury and Nayland Colum, who were travelling together. Both were seen outside their cabins, despite the violence of the storm, and were presumed to have been swept off into the sea and drowned. Though the storm abated with remarkable suddenness immediately after the loss of these passengers, no trace of them could be found. The proper forms have been forwarded. . . .



BEING THE NARRATIVE OF HORVATH BLAYNE

1

THAT SOME RECORD of the events leading up to the so-called "top secret experiment" conducted at an uncharted South Pacific island on a September day in 1947 ought to be made, I have no question. That it would be wise is a moot point. There are some things against which the human race, which has in any event but a brief moment to remain on this planet to add to the brief moment of its previous existence, can be only inadequately forewarned and forearmed; and, this being so, it is conceivable that it would be better to remain silent and let one's fellowmen wait upon events.

In final analysis, however, there are judges far better qualified than I, and the progression of events both before and since that "experiment" has been so disturbing and so suggestive of incredibly ancient evil almost beyond man's grasp that I am compelled to make this record before time dims these events—if ever it could—or before my own obliteration, which is inevitable, and may, indeed, be nearer than I think.

The episode began prosaically enough in the most famous bar in the world, in Singapore. . . .

I saw the five gentlemen sitting together when first I came into the bar and sat down. I was not far from them, and alone, and I looked at them casually, thinking that someone I knew might be among them. An elderly man with dark glasses and a strangely impressive countenance, and four young men, in late twenties or early thirties, intent upon some discussion conducted with considerable animation. I recognized no one; so I looked away. I had sat there perhaps ten minutes, perhaps a little less; Henry Caravel had come up and spoken to me in passing, and we had taken note of the time together; he had just gone when I heard my name spoken.

"Perhaps Mr. Blayne could enlighten us?"

The voice was cordial, well-modulated, with a peculiar carrying power.

Looking up, I saw the five gentlemen at their table gazing toward me expectantly. At that instant, the old man stood.

"Our discussion is archaeological in a sense, Mr. Blayne," he said directly. "If I may presume—I am Professor Laban Shrewsbury, a fellow American. Will you join us?"

I thanked him and, moved by a lively curiosity, went over to his table.

He introduced his companions—Andrew Phelan, Abel Keane, Claiborne Boyd, and Nayland Colum—and turned once more to me.

"Of course, we all know Horvath Blayne. We have been following with keen interest your papers on Angkor-Vat and the Khmer civilization, and, with even more interest, your studies among the ruins of Ponape. It is no coincidence that we are at the moment discussing the pantheon of Polynesian deities. Tell us, in your opinion, does the Polynesian sea-god, Tangaroa, have the same origin as Neptune?"

"Probably Hindu or Indo-Chinese in origin," I guessed.

"Those people are not primarily seafarers," said the professor promptly. "There is a concept older than those civilizations, even if we concede at once that the Polynesian civilization is much younger than those of the Asiatic continent which gave rise to them. No, we are not interested so much in their relation to other figures in the pantheon, as to the conceit which gave them being in the first place. And to its relation to so many batrachian or

ichthyic figures and motifs which occur and recur in the art work, ancient and modern, to be found in the South Pacific islands."

I protested that I was not primarily an artist, and certainly could not presume to be a critic of art.

The professor brushed this aside with courteous detachment. "But you are familiar with art. And I wonder whether you can explain why the primitives of the South Pacific should emphasize the batrachian or ichthyic in their artifacts and arts, while the primitives of the North Pacific, for example, emphasize characteristics which are clearly avian. There are exceptions, of course; you will recognize them. The lizard figures of Easter Island and the batrachian pieces from Melanesia and Micronesia are common to these areas; the avian masks and headdresses of the North Pacific Indian tribes are common to the Canadian coast. But we find on occasion among those coastal Indian tribes disturbingly familiar motifs; consider, for instance, the markedly batrachian aspects of the shaman's headdress of the Haida tribe common to Prince of Wales Island and the ceremonial shark headdress of the Tlingit of Ketchikan, Alaska. The totems of the North Pacific Indians are primarily avian in concept, whereas such things as the ancestor figures carved into the tree-ferns of the New Hebrides quite clearly suggest aquatic dwellers."

I remarked that ancestor-worship was common to the Asiatic continent.

But this was not his principal thesis, which I recognized in the expectance with which his companions attended to him. He came to it presently. Apropos the sea-deities of primitive peoples, had I ever encountered in my archaeological inquiries any of the legends pertaining to the mythological being, Cthulhu, whom he regarded as the progenitor of all sea-gods and the lesser deities connected with water as an element?

The comments he had made now fell into a distinct and well-knit pattern. Cthulhu, as the ancient god of water, the seas, a water elemental in a sense, must be considered as the primal deity of the South Pacific, while the avian motifs expressed in the artifacts and work of art common to the North Pacific derived from a worship of an air elemental rather than one of the sea. I was indeed familiar with the Cthulhu Mythos, with its remarkable lore in essence so familiar to the Christian Mythos of the expulsion of Sathanus and his followers and their ever-ceaseless attempts to re-conquer heaven.

The Mythos, as I recalled it while listening to the professor speak en-

gagingly of Cthulhu, turned on a conflict between beings known as the Elder Gods, who presumably inhabited the cosmos many light-years away, and lesser beings called the Ancient Ones or the Great Old Ones, who were presumably the motive forces of evil as opposed to those representing good, who were the benevolent Elder Gods. All had apparently existed in harmony at one time, but then a revolt on the part of the Ancient Ones—who were Cthulhu, master of the waters; Hastur, who roamed the interplanetary spaces before his imprisonment in the dark Lake of Hali; Yog-Sothoth, most powerful of the Ancient Ones; Ithaqua, the god of the winds; Tsathoggua and Shub-Niggurath, gods of the earth and of fecundity; Nyarlathotep, their dread messenger; and others—resulted in their vanquishment and banishment to various places in the universe, from which they hoped to rise once more against the Elder Gods, and where they were served by their minions, cults of men and animals reared in their service. There were, additionally, pertaining to Cthulhu, supposedly inhabiting a secret place on earth, rather shockingly suggestive legends that certain of his batrachian followers, known as the Deep Ones, had mated with men and produced a horrible travesty of mankind known to be habitants of certain coastal Massachusetts towns.

Moreover, the Cthulhu Mythos had sprung from a collection of incredibly old manuscripts and similar sources purporting to be factual accounts, though nothing was adduced to prove them anything other than fiction of a highly skilled order; these manuscripts and books—the *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred; the *Cultes des Goules,* the work of an eccentric French nobleman, the Count d'Erlette; the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* of Von Junzt, a known aberrant who had roamed Europe and Asia in search of the remnants of old cults; the *Celaeno Fragments;* the *R'lyeh Text;* the Pnakotic Manuscripts; and the like—had been seized upon by writers of contemporary fiction and freely used as the source for incredible tales of fantasy and the macabre, and these had given a kind of aura of authenticity to what, at best, was a collection of lore and legends perhaps unique in the annals of mankind but surely little more.

"But you are skeptical, Mr. Blayne," observed the professor.

"I'm afraid I have the scientific mind," I answered.

"I rather think all of us here think similarly of ourselves," he said.

"Am I to understand that you believe in this volume of lore?"

He gazed at me disconcertingly from behind his dark spectacles. "Mr. Blayne, for more than three decades I have been on the trail of Cthulhu. Time after time I have believed that I have closed his avenues of ingress into our time; time after time I have been misled in thinking so."

"Then if you believe one aspect of the pantheon, you must believe all the rest," I countered.

"That is not necessarily so," he replied. "But there are wide areas of belief. I have seen and I know."

"I, too," said Phelan, and his supporting cry was echoed by the others.

The truly scientific mind is as hesitant to deprecate as it is to lend support. "Let us begin with the primal struggle between the Elder Gods and the Great Old Ones," I said cautiously. "What is the nature of your evidence?"

"The sources are almost infinite. Consider almost all the ancient writings which speak of a great catastrophe which involved the earth. Look to the Old Testament, to the battle of Beth-Horon, led by Joshua. 'And he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed. . . .' Look to the *Annals of Cuauhtitlan* of the lore of the Nahua Indians of Mexico, which speak of an endless night, a tale verified by the Spanish priest, Fr. Bernadino de Sahagun, who, coming to the New World a generation after Columbus, told of the great catastrophe in which the sun rose but a little way over the horizon and then stood still, a catastrophe witnessed by the American Indians. And the Bible again: 'As they fled from before Israel . . . the Lord cast down great stones upon them in Azekah, and they died. . . .' There are parallel accounts in other ancient manuscripts—the *Popul Vuh* of the Mayas, the Egyptian *Papyrus Ipuwer,* the Buddhist *Visuddhi-Magga,* the Persian *Zend-Aversta,* the Hindu *Vedas,* many another. There are curiously coincidental records left in ancient art—the Venus tablets of Babylon, found in the ruins of the library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh, certain of the panoplies at Angkor-Vat, which you must know—and there are the strangely altered clocks of ancient times—the water clock of the Temple of Amon at Karnak, now inaccurate for day and night; the shadow clock of Fayum, Egypt, inaccurate, too; the astronomical panel in the tomb of Senmut, in which the stars are shown in an order they do not have, but which may presumably have been correct for Senmut's time. And these stars, I submit, are not just accidentally those of the Orion-Taurus group, held to be the seat of both the

Elder Gods—who are believed to exist at or near Betelgeuse—and at least one of the Ancient Ones, Hastur; and were presumably home to all the Ancient Ones. So that the catastrophe duly recorded in the old documents may very well have been evidence of the titanic battle which was waged between the Elder Gods and the rebellious Ancient Ones."

I pointed out that there was a current theory concerning erratic conduct on the part of the planet now called Venus.

Professor Shrewsbury shrugged this away almost with impatience. "Entertaining, but pure nonsense. The concept of Venus as a one-time comet can be disproved scientifically; the concept of the conflict between the Elder Gods and the Ancient Ones cannot. I submit, Mr. Blayne, that your actual conviction of disbelief is not as strong as your words."

In this he was eminently correct. What this strange old man had said had aroused and awakened a thousand latent memories, all of which now coalesced in the events of the moment. An archaeologist cannot have seen the weird grotesques of Easter Island without a sense of an impending past; he cannot have looked upon Angkor-Vat or the shunned ruins of certain of the Marquesas Islands without a dim awareness of the terror that lurked in ancient places; he cannot have studied the legends of ancient peoples without recognizing that the lore of mankind, however exaggerated, takes root in some remote reality. Moreover, there was about my newly-found companions an air of gravity which was plain behind their good-nature, and was almost sinister without being malevolent. I could not doubt that these gentlemen were deadly serious, for each of them testified mutely that he had been on this quest for more than just a short time.

"You see," continued Professor Shrewsbury, "it would be folly to pretend that this meeting was an accident. Your movements had been studied enough to make it occur. It is just possible that in your studies of ancient ruins and the drawings, hieroglyphics, and other remains found among them, you may have happened upon something which might afford us a clue to the place we seek."

"And what is that?" I asked.

"An island." So saying, he unfolded before me a crudely-drawn map.

I examined the map with interest which was quickened appreciably when it dawned upon me that this was no ordinary map done by the hand of an ill-informed person, but rather a map drawn by someone who clearly

believed in the objects he drew; that these objects were not placed as he had placed them suggested an artist of centuries ago.

"Java and Borneo," I said, identifying them. "These islands are apparently the Carolines and the marked place is northward. But the directions are not very clear."

"Yes, that is its drawback," agreed Professor Shrewsbury dryly.

I looked at him sharply. "Where did you get this, Professor?"

"From a very old man."

"He must have been very old indeed," I agreed.

"Almost fifteen centuries," he answered, without a smile. "But, come, do you recognize this place beyond the Carolines?"

I shook my head.

"Then we fall back upon your own research, Mr. Blayne. You have been in the South Pacific ever since the end of the Second World War. You have gone from island to island, and you will have seen certainly that in some areas there is a marked emphasis on the batrachian motif, or the ichthyic motif—it matters little, save that we have reason to believe one island at least to be either the focal point or near the focal point of the occurrence of artifacts and works of art stressing the batrachian."

"Ponape," I said.

He nodded, and the others waited expectantly.

"You see," he went on, "I have been to the Black Island, which has no name and is uncharted because it is not always visible and rises to the surface only at rare intervals. But my means of travel was somewhat unorthodox, my attempt to blast the island and its horrible ruins was ineffective; we must find it again, and we shall find it most readily by picking up the trail of the batrachian motif in Polynesian art."

"There are certain legends," I put in, "which speak of a vanishing land. It would presumably be stationary?"

"Yes, making its appearance only when upheavals of the ocean's bed thrust it up. And then evidently not for long. I need not remind you that there have been recent tremors recorded by seismographs for the region of the South Pacific; conditions are thus ideal for our quest. We are at liberty to suppose it to be part of a larger, submerged land area, quite possibly one of the legendary continents."

"Mu," said Phelan.

"If Mu existed," countered the professor gravely.

"There is ample evidence to believe it did," I said, "together with Atlantis. If you were to fall back upon your own kind of evidence, there is plenty of legendry to give the belief body—the Bible's story of the Deluge, for instance; the ancient books' accounts of catastrophes, the submerging of vast land areas depicted in the drawings found at the sites of so much archaeological discovery."

One of the professor's companions grinned and said, "You're entering into the spirit of it, Mr. Blayne."

The professor, however, gazed at me without smiling. "You believe in the existence of Mu, Mr. Blayne?"

"I'm afraid I do."

"And presumably also in the ancient civilizations said to have inhabited Mu and Atlantis," he went on. "There are certain legends attributable to some such lost civilizations, Mr. Blayne—particularly in relation to their sea deities—and there are survivals of ancient worship in the Balearics, in the islands of the Carolines, at Innsmouth, Massachusetts, and in a few other widely separated areas. If Atlantis lay off the coast of Spain, and Mu near the Marshalls, presumably there might have been yet another land area at one time lying off the coast of Massachusetts. And the Black Island might be part of yet another land area; we cannot know. But it is certain that the Bible's Deluge and other similar legendary catastrophes might well have been evidence of the titanic struggle which resulted in the banishment of Cthulhu to one of the lost continents of this planet."

I nodded, aware for what seemed the first time of the intense scrutiny of the others.

"The Black Island is thus far the only known avenue directly to Cthulhu; all others are primarily in the possession of the Deep Ones. We must therefore search for it by every means at our disposal."

It was at this point of our conversation that I became aware of a subtle force vying with my interest, which was far keener than I had permitted myself to show; it was a blind feeling of hostility, an awareness, as it were, of something malign in the very atmosphere. I looked from one to another of them, but there was nothing in their eyes save only an interest similar to my own. Yet the aura of fear, of enmity, was unmistakable, perhaps made all the more so by its very tenuousness. I looked past my companions, allowing my

glance to travel along the bar, among the tables; I saw no one who was even aware of us, though the bar, as always, was crowded with people of all nationalities in all walks of life. The conviction of hostility, the aura of fear persisted, lying against my consciousness as were it a tangible thing.

I gave my attention again to Professor Shrewsbury. He talked now of the trail of Cthulhu through the arts and crafts of primitive peoples, and his words conjured up from my own memories a thousand corroborating details—of the curious figures found in the Sepik River valley of New Guinea; of the Tapa cloth designs of the Tonga islanders; of the hideously suggestive Fisherman's God of the Cook Islanders, with its misshapen torso and its substitution of tentacles for legs and arms; of the stone *tiki* of the Marquesas, markedly batrachian in aspect; of the carvings of the New Zealand Maori, which depict creatures neither man nor octopus, neither fish nor frog, but something of all four; of the revolting war-shield design used by Queenslanders, a design of a labyrinth under water with a tortuously malefic figure at the end of it, tentacles extended as if for prey; and the similar shell pendants of the Papuans; of the ceremonial music of the Indonesias, particularly the Batak dream music, and the Wayang shadow-play of leather puppets on ancient themes dramatizing a legend of sea-beings. All these pointed unmistakably to Ponape from one direction, while the ceremonial figures used in some parts of the Hawaiian Islands and the great heads of Rano-raraku on Easter Island made a similar indication from the other.

Ponape, with its shunned ruins, its abandoned port in which the carvings are of unmistakable significance, carvings of brooding terror, of fishmen, of frog-men, of octopoids, all speaking mutely of a strange and terrible way of life led by inhabitants who were half-bestial, half-human. And from Ponape, where?

"You are thinking of Ponape," said Professor Shrewsbury quietly.

"Yes—and of what might lie beyond. If the Black Island is not between Ponape and Singapore, it must lie between that island and Easter Island."

"The only direction we have is that of the Johansen narrative, discovered in Lovecraft, and subsequently repeated in the story of the disappearance of the H.M.S. *Advocate.* S. Latitude 47° 53', W. Longitude 127° 37'. That would be in the general area. But the latitude and longitude may not be correct; according to the Greenbie account, that is the place at which the

Advocate ran into a storm 'blowing something terrible.' There is thus a possibility of some error, since we have no way of knowing how far off course the ship may have been blown, nor how long a time elapsed since Greenbie last ascertained longitude and latitude. He makes note that they were steering 'a course straight for the Admiralties or New Guinea . . . but we saw by the stars that we were off course by west.'

"The Johansen narrative. . . ."

I interrupted him. "Forgive me, I am not familiar with these accounts."

"My apologies. Of course, you could not be. They are not vital to your knowledge, but exist only as curiously corroborative statements. Or rather, as statements which are extremely suggestive in the light of what we know. If one has no belief in Cthulhu and the pantheon of Elder Gods and Ancient Ones, such accounts are meaningless, and all too readily dismissed as hysteria; if one keeps an open mind, however, such accounts become damnably suggestive. One cannot dismiss them."

"These accounts apart, and all else, too," I said, "what do you expect of me?"

"I submit that you are perhaps more qualified to speak with authority on the arts and artifacts of the South Pacific than anyone else within the entire region. We are satisfied that the primitive drawings and sculptures of these people will point unmistakably to the approximate location of the Black Island. Specifically, we are interested in the occurrence of any work similar to the Fisherman's God of Cook Island, which, we have reason to believe, is a representation, as seen by the primitive mind, of Cthulhu himself. By narrowing the circle of its incidence, it is logical to suppose that we can box in the site of the island."

I nodded thoughtfully, certain that I could almost effortlessly construct the ring that Professor Shrewsbury visualized.

"Can we count on you, Mr. Blayne?"

"More than that. If you have room for me, I'll join your party."

Professor Shrewsbury favored me with a long silent glance which I found somewhat disconcerting, but at last he said, "We have a place for you, Mr. Blayne. We hope to leave Singapore in two days." He gave me his card, writing rapidly on the back of it. "You will find me at this address if you need me."

2

I TOOK MY LEAVE OF Professor Shrewsbury's party with curious misgivings. My offer to accompany them had been made almost involuntarily; I had had no intention of doing more than the professor had asked, but some impulse stronger than my own wish had impelled me instead to propose that I go with them to seek their goal. Once outside the bar, I asked myself why I had not doubted the professor's strange story; the evidence he had offered was purely circumstantial, and I could not have said that I had in fact ever come upon anything more to justify belief; and yet I found myself believing readily not only in the existence of the Black Island, but also in the vast mythology so sketchily outlined for me, in all that pantheon of Elder Gods and Ancient Ones of which that oddly persuasive and yet curiously repellant old man in the black glasses had spoken. Moreover, I recognized that my belief stemmed from something more than Professor Shrewsbury's words; it arose from a deep inner conviction, as if I had known all this long before but had either refused to acknowledge it or had failed to become aware of it because the proper opportunity for recognition had never arisen.

And yet I had always been strangely stirred at sight of just such art as Professor Shrewsbury had hinted at, and most of all, at the Cook Islanders' horribly suggestive Fisherman's God. What Professor Shrewsbury had plainly intimated was that this work had had a living model; and of this I, despite my archaeological training, had never entertained the shadow of a doubt. I could ask myself now to discover the reasons for my belief in the face of the previous record of dubiety I had established in my field; I could not answer, save to point to an inner conviction far stronger than any amount of cold rationalization. For it could not be denied that Professor Shrewsbury's analysis was not in itself factual, that the explanation for the various events and the nature of the evidence he projected were alike hypothetical in the extreme, that other solutions presented themselves as well, for the annals of primitive peoples are replete with many weird symbols and customs utterly unrelated to the living-patterns of contemporary man. But no challenge caused any wavering in my conviction. I knew, as if I had been there, that there was indeed an uncharted island near Ponape, that it was part

of a sunken kingdom which might indeed have been R'lyeh and part of Mu, that it was the source of an incredible power, and no rationalization could explain either my conviction or my complete refusal to consider any other explanation of the tentative outline Professor Shrewsbury had offered. He, too, knew; the facts he had adduced were but the tiniest fraction of the adducible evidence.

And what impulse was it that sent me into the shadows to wait upon the emergence of Professor Shrewsbury and his companions? I could not say; yet I remained in a place of concealment until the five men left the bar, watching them come out. I had no impulse to follow, but I knew as by intuition that they would not be unattended, and they were not. Their followers walked at a respectable distance behind them—one, a second, yet another, at widely separated intervals.

I stepped out and faced one of them. He met my eyes questioningly for a moment, held my gaze, and looked away. A lascar, I judged him, but oddly deformed, with a curiously suggestive head, foreshortened, with little brow, and repellantly wide-mouthed, with scarcely a chin at all, but a sloping fold of skin that vanished into his neck. And his skin, too, was rough, warty. I felt no horror, looking at him. Perhaps Professor Shrewsbury's hints had prepared me for such an apparition, for I had known someone would be there. I was equally certain, however, that, for the present at least, my newly-found friends were in no danger.

I took myself off to my quarters presently, very thoughtful and preoccupied, for there was manifestly something more than Professor Shrewsbury's story and the quest of the five for the mythological Cthulhu to stir me. Once at my rooms, I found myself drawn to the packet of papers which had come down to me from my grandfather Waite—for my name had not always been Blayne, having undergone a change in the home of my foster-parents in Boston—my grandfather Asaph Waite, whom I had never consciously seen, and who perished with my grandmother, my father, and my mother in a disaster which had struck their town when I was yet only a babe in arms, and while I was on a visit with cousins in Boston who had forthwith adopted me after a loss which, to any other older child, would have been shockingly tragic.

My grandfather's papers were wrapped in oilskin—he had been a seafaring man out of Massachusetts, at one time an agent of the famous Marsh

family, which for generations had been seafaring men, ranging far and wide over the face of the earth—and I had had them with me for years. I had examined the small packet from time to time, with curious stirrings and misgivings; tonight something Professor Shrewsbury had said had brought the papers back into my memory, and I wanted to look at them once more, without delay.

They consisted of fragments of an old diary—some pages had been torn out here and there; of fragmentary letters; a few documents, and some of what purported to be my grandfather's own writings entitled simply: *Invocations,* though down in one corner someone had added: *to Dagon.* The *Invocations* came to hand first. These were evidently intended as at least semi-poetry, and were written in a manner at times coherent, at others apparently incoherent—unless, as I was now prepared to admit, I lacked the proper key to understanding. I read but one of them, with considerably more care, however, than I had previously given it.

"By all the depths of Y'ha-nthlei—and the dwellers thereof, for the One Over All;

"By the Sign of Kish—and all who obey it, for its Author;

"By the door to Yhe—and all who use it, who have gone before and who shall come after, for Him to Whom It Leadeth;

"By Him Who Is To Come . . .

"*Ph'nglui mglw-nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah-nagl fhtagn.*"

I recognized in the final incomprehensible line, two of the names Dr. Shrewsbury had used, and I was even more disquieted than ever to discover them here in my possession, even if I had come by them in so casual a fashion.

I turned next to the diary, which was evidently, judging by notes pertinent to events of the day in the United States, for 1928. The entries were not frequent, but it was noteworthy that, after a beginning in which my grandfather had chronicled, journal-fashion, comments on the political and historical events of his time, his attention turned ever more and more to something mysterious and personal, to which the diary afforded no key. The entries pertinent to something which troubled my grandfather exceedingly began in late April of that year.

"April 23. Out to D. R. again last night, where saw what M. affirms is Him. Amorphous, tentacled, inhuman. Could I have expected other? M. extremely excited. Cannot say that I shared his excitement except that I found myself vacillating between M.'s extreme on the one hand and an equal extremity of aversion on the other. A stormy night. Do not know where all this will lead.

"April 24. Took note of many boat losses in last night's storm. But none from here, though many were to D. R. So evidently we have been protected for another purpose which will be made plain in good time. Met M. on the street today; he took no notice of me, as if he did not know who I was. I understand now why he constantly wears the black gloves. If those who do not understand should *see!*

"April 27. A stranger in town, questioning old Zadok. The word has gone around that Z. will have to be dealt with. A pity. He seemed always such a harmless, garrulous old tosspot. Too garrulous, perhaps. But no one has heard him say anything. The stranger, they say, plied him with liquor."

There were similar entries, and other accounts of strange journeys to the place given only as D. R., evidently to be reached only by water—the Atlantic—but not far from the settlement, for there was no account of lengthy travelling over water to reach the goal from the town. These entries varied in intensity, but became steadily more and more chaotic; evidently the town had been seriously disturbed by the prying questions of a strange visitor to that clannish community. By late May, he was writing:

"May 21. Word passed around that a 'Federal Man' was asking questions in town today. Visited M.'s Refining Company. I have not seen him myself, but Obed mentioned seeing him. A short, wiry man, very dark-skinned. A Southerner, perhaps. He supposedly comes directly from Washington. M. has cancelled the meeting tonight, and also a trip to D. R. Leopold was to have gone as the s. tonight. Now he will be passed over and the next one will be chosen.

"May 22. The sea very turbulent last night. Anger at D. R.? The trip should not have been postponed.

"May 23. Rumors grow. Gilman reported seeing a destroyer in the vicinity of D. R. last evening, but no one else saw it. Gilman entirely too imaginative. Should be disciplined for adding to the growing discontent.

"May 27. Something wrong. More strangers in town. Also ships off the coast, apparently armed. The docks being examined by these tight-lipped outsiders. Are they in reality Federal Men, or are they others—from H., for instance? How could we know? I have suggested it to M., but he says, no, they cannot be, he would 'feel' it if so. M. does not appear to be disturbed, but he is not entirely at his ease. Everyone is running to him.

"June. Z. has been taken care of, right under the noses of the Federal Men. What can they want? I am prevailing on J. to send the child off to Martha."

It was to this period of the diary to which one of the letters belonged; recognizing it, I had placed the letter to my foster-mother between the pages of the diary at this point; and I now opened it and read it once more.

"7th June 1928

"Dear Martha,

"I write in considerable haste because we have had to make decisions in a hurry here these past few days. Events have turned up so that it would be best to send Horvath to you for safekeeping. John and Abigail have agreed, however reluctantly; so I send him with Amos. It might be best to keep Amos with him for a week or two, until he can accustom himself to you and your way of existence there in Boston. Then Amos may come home again, though I do not need him at present, and if you have use for him, by all means retain him until it is convenient for you to send him back to us.

"Ever affectionately,

"ASAPH WAITE."

Comparatively few entries remained in the diary, and all were undated, appearing simply under "June." They were increasingly disturbed, betraying what must have been my grandfather's extreme agitation.

> "June. M. reports questions very upsetting. Bear directly on D. R. and the 'goings-on' there. Someone must have talked to the Federal Men. But who? If M. only knew, he would follow Z. There is no room here for traitors, and whoever it is will be hunted down and destroyed. And not only him alone, but all who are with him or who support him, including, if he is married, his wife and family.
>
> "June. Questions about the 'rites' at Dagon Hall. Whoever talked *knows.*
>
> "June. Large-scale operations at the docks. A destroyer out at D. R. Wild talk of government taking control of situation.
>
> "June. It is true. Blasting begun, and fires have started to spread up from the docks. They will go out of control. Some have taken to the water, but the fire is cutting others off unless they go out of town and around it. . . ."

Reading these entries again, I found myself more disturbed than ever. The nature of the catastrophe which overtook my progenitors was still not clear. They might have been caught in the fires which followed the inexplicable "blasting;" they might have become involved in the blastings themselves. Whatever happened, the events which took place in that Massachusetts town had occurred in 1928; in that same year my parents and my grandparents had been killed in an unnamed catastrophe; it was not unwarranted to presume that these events were connected. The entries in my grandfather's diary actually revealed nothing save that some enterprise with which he was connected, evidently led by the man M., had attracted the attention of Federal agents who had invaded the town and taken corrective measures. There was no hint as to the nature of the enterprise, but presumably it was illegal, for nothing was set down in my grandfather's papers to identify it.

The remaining letters—there were but two others—were written also in June, 1928. One was to my foster-parents.

"10th June 1928.

"Dear Martha and Arvold,

"I have forwarded by mail out of Arkham a copy of my last will and testament, should anything happen to me, putting you down as executors and administrators of the trust fund I shall leave to Horvath. Apart from such fees as are set forth for you in the nature of a bequest, I have left all my property to my son and daughter-in-law, but in the event of their deaths to Horvath. I hope I am not too pessimistic, but I do not believe in being inexcusably sanguine. The events of the past few days are not encouraging.

"As always,

"ASAPH."

The second letter was undated, but by its nature it must have been written in June also; it was not an original, as were those to my foster-parents, but a copy my grandfather had evidently retained.

"Dear W.,

"A hasty note to let you know M. thinks all is lost for the present. He does not think damage can be done to Y'ha., but none of us knows. The place swarms with Federal Men. We think now it is all Zadok's doing, but Z. has been taken care of. We do not know who it was he talked to, but have reason to believe it was one of us. He will not escape. Though he was pursued up the tracks out of town and got away, he will be forever haunted by what he has done. Of course, you may say, as some have said, it would never have happened if the Marshes had kept away from those strange creatures at P., but the South Pacific is a long way from Massachusetts, and who would guess that they could make their way here to the reef. I am afraid now we are all getting what people call 'the Marsh look.' It is not attractive. I shall write no more, but I adjure you, if anything happens to us, and that may be, for this thing has so impressed the Federal Men that there is no semblance of a trial here for anyone or any place they elect to destroy—do what you can for my grandson,

Horvath Waite, whom you will find in the care of Mr. and Mrs. Arvold W. Blayne, in Boston.

"ASAPH."

These were the reactions of my grandfather Waite attendant upon the catastrophe which struck at his town and at him and his family in that summer of 1928. I had read these papers before, but never with such fascination. Perhaps it was the knowledge of these, which lay in memory, which accounted for my interest in the project which occupied Professor Shrewsbury. And yet I could not wholly believe that it was. Together with the conviction that within the boundaries of Professor Shrewsbury's quest lay the solution to the mystery which had dogged my grandfather was a haunting memory which loomed forever just on the perimeter of recognition, and it was this, however nameless and faceless, which motivated my deeper and more troubled concern with the trail of Cthulhu, for which I was about to surrender for the time being at least all my archaeological research, my hopes and ambitions for my future in the field I had chosen for my own. The compulsion was stronger than my wish.

I put my grandfather's papers away once more, wrapping them in the oilskin in which they had come to my foster-parents, and then, far from tired, I set about to track down, even as Professor Shrewsbury had asked, the occurrence of certain hideously suggestive motifs in the art patterns of the South Pacific islanders, particularly the Fisherman's God of Cook Island. At this I worked steadily for more than two hours, consulting not only such references as I owned, but also my own voluminous notes and sketches. At the end of that time I realized that the Fisherman's God had made its appearance in one form or another as far to the south as Australia, as far to the north as the Kuriles, and between, in Cambodia, Indo-China, Siam, and the Malay States; but I had affirmed also, as I had already foreseen, that the incidence of its occurrence was immeasurably greater in the vicinity of Ponape. However the circle were drawn, its center would be at or near Ponape; that the object of Professor Shrewsbury's quest lay in the immediate vicinity I had not a shred of doubt.

And that something inconceivably malign lay there in that hidden place, I had also no doubt. For it was from Ponape that the M. of my grandfather Waite's papers had come home, bringing in his aftermath the events which

were to culminate in the tragedy of 1928. The recurrence of the island in the legends and corroborative accounts pertinent thereto was not an accident or chance; Ponape was the outpost of mankind's civilization, the outpost nearest the gate into the weird and terrible world of the Ancient Ones, of whom Great Cthulhu alone lay forever sleeping, waiting upon the events which would some day rouse him from his centuries-old torpor and send him forth once more upon the unsuspecting peoples of the earth, forth to conquer and bring all the planet under his dominion.

3

WE SHIPPED FOR PONAPE on the second day, travelling by one of the regular steamers plying the islands. I had thought we were to have possession of a ship of our own, but Professor Shrewsbury offered in explanation that other arrangements had been made out of Ponape. We gathered together on the deck soon after leaving the docks, primarily for the purpose of comparing notes, and I discovered that all of them spoke most matter-of-factly of being under surveillance in Singapore.

"And you," Professor Shrewsbury turned to me. "Were you aware of being followed, Mr. Blayne?"

I shook my head. "But I had thought someone trailed after you," I admitted. "Who were they?"

"The Deep Ones," offered Phelan. "They are everywhere, but we've had other followers far more dangerous. The star protects us from them; they cannot harm us as long as we carry it."

"I have one for you, Mr. Blayne," said Professor Shrewsbury.

"Who are the Deep Ones?" I asked.

Professor Shrewsbury offered an immediate explanation. The Deep Ones, he said, were minions of Cthulhu. Originally they had been aquatic only—hideously suggestive of human beings, but essentially batrachian or ichthyic; but over a century ago certain American traders had come into the South Pacific and had formed alliances with the Deep Ones, mating with them and thus producing a hybrid breed which could exist equally well on land or in the sea; it was this hybrid breed which was to be found in most of the port cities of the world, never very far from water. That they were directed by some sort of super-intelligence from the sea seemed unquestionable, since

they were never long in discovering any member of Professor Shrewsbury's party, all of whom had had previous encounters with the followers of Cthulhu—and, indeed, with certain minions of others of the Ancient Ones. Their purpose was clearly menacing, but the power of the five-pointed star, which was sealed with the seal of the Elder Gods, rendered them impotent. Should any one of them fail to carry the star, however, he might fall victim to the Deep Ones, or to the Abominable Mi-Go, or to the Tcho-Tcho people, the Shoggoths, the Shantaks, or any among a score or more of those human and semi-human creatures dedicated to the service of the Ancient Ones.

Professor Shrewsbury excused himself to go to his cabin and bring me the star of which he had spoken. It was a rough-surfaced stone, grey in color, with a barely distinguishable seal representing a pillar of light, as closely as I could approximate it. It was not large; it scarcely covered my palm, but it had a most peculiar effect on me, for it felt as if it burned my flesh, and I found it curiously repellant. I put it into my pocket, and there it seemed incredibly heavy; there, too, it left a burning sensation on my skin, despite the clothing between; it did not appear to have a similar effect on the others, as far as I could ascertain. Indeed, it became so heavy, presently, and afflicted me so sorely with the sensation of heat, that I found it necessary to excuse myself and hasten to my cabin so that I could remove the stone from my person and leave it among my possessions.

Only then did I feel free to rejoin my companions, where I took a listener's part in their discussion of events beyond my ken—not alone of Cthulhu and Hastur, and their minions, or of the others, not alone of the Elder Gods and that titanic battle which must have taken place eons ago and involved countless universes, but of certain adventures these five had shared together, for they made countless references to ancient tablets, to books which, to judge by the dates which occurred in their conversation, had been made long before mankind had learned to write even on papyrus. They spoke repeatedly, too, of a "library" on "Celaeno," which was beyond my ken. I was loath to ask, but I gathered that they had undergone a period of exile at what must have been certainly an archaeologically priceless retreat, a city or library at a place called "Celaeno," of which I knew nothing and was reluctant to admit ignorance of a site so archaeologically ancient under a name I had hitherto associated only with the stars.

Their references to the Ancient Ones intimated too of feuds among

these beings, between Hastur and Cthugha on the one hand, and Cthulhu and Ithaqua on the other; evidently these beings were united only against the Elder Gods, but vied with one another for the worship of their minions and the destruction or seduction of such inhabitants of their regions as came within their orbits. I gathered, too, that Professor Shrewsbury and his companions had been drawn together often by mere chance, that all had been exposed to similar dangers, and all had eventually sought the haven which the professor had discovered many years before. It was somewhat disquieting, too, to reflect upon certain casual references made by the professor to events in which he had a part but which had taken place much longer ago than could have been possible, considering his age; but I concluded, finally, that I must have been in error and misunderstood.

That night I had the first of the curiously disturbing dreams which haunted our voyage. Though I slept soundly enough, I was never free of dreams. I dreamed that night that I found myself in a great city deep in the sea. My subaqueous existence did not trouble me; I was able to breathe, move about as I pleased, and carry on a normal existence in the ocean's depths. The city, however, was not a modern city; it was ancient—quite possibly such a city as might have been visualized by an archaeologist—far more ancient than any I had ever known before, with vast monolithic buildings, on the walls of many of which had been emblazoned representations of the sun, the moon, the stars, and certain grotesquely horrible figments of the artist's imagination, some of them amazingly similar to the Fisherman's God of the Cook Islanders. Moreover, some of the buildings featured doorways of an unusual size, both in width and height, as were they constructed for beings beyond the conception of mankind.

I moved about among the city's streets and lanes unmolested, but I was not alone. Other human or semi-human beings became visible from time to time, most of them strangely batrachian in their aspects and movements, and my own locomotion was rather more batrachian than human. I saw presently that all the inhabitants were moving in one general direction, and I followed in their wake, joining the stream. Thus I came presently to a rise in the sea-bottom, at the top of which stood a ruined building which was clearly a temple. The building was of black stone, of pieces suggesting the Egyptian pyramids; it was no longer intact, but had fallen away, disclosing beyond the great doorway a passage which struck downward, into the sea-

bottom. Around this doorway, in a semi-circle, clustered the denizens of that ocean depth, I among them, waiting upon some event which was foreordained.

I grew aware of a chanting ululation rising from among them, but I could distinguish no words, for the language was not one I knew. Yet I had the conviction that I should know it, and several of the strange beings near me stared at me in a peculiarly revolting way, accusingly, as if I were guilty of some breach of conduct. But their attention was soon drawn away from me to that ruined doorway. Even while others were still joining the throng from the city below, a kind of glow began to come into being in the doorway, an oddly diffused light, not white or yellow, but pale green, lambent, like the movement of the curtain auroras, deepening in intensity as the moments passed. Then, deep in the heart of the passage, rising out of the light, came a great amorphous mass of flesh, preceded by incredibly long, lashing tentacles, a thing with the head of what might have been a gigantic human being in its upper half, and an octopoid creature below.

I caught but a single, horrified glimpse of it; then I screamed aloud and woke.

I lay for some time trying to ascertain the reason for being of the dream I had had. That it grew from my knowledge of the ancient legends, I could not doubt; but how could I account for my perspective in the dream? I was not an interloper, I was in fact on my way to discover the point of egress for Cthulhu. Moreover, I was a witness to something more than was set down in any of the references or sources I had read, and nothing of what I had dreamed had been envisioned in anything Professor Shrewsbury had said.

But I puzzled over this problem in vain. The only explanation I could credit lay in the work of a perfervid imagination, which might conceivably have conjured up the substance of my dream. Lulled by the smooth movement of the ship, I drifted off into sleep once more, and again into dream.

This time, however, the setting was far different. I dreamed that I was a spectator at cataclysmic events far out among the constellations and galaxies. There a great battle was joined between beings far beyond the conceptions of a mere human being. They were great, constantly changing masses of what appeared to be pure light—sometimes in the form of pillars, sometimes as great globes, sometimes as clouds; these masses struggled titanically with other masses likewise constantly changing not only in intensity and

shape, but also in color. Their size was monstrous; compared to them, I had the size of an ant to a dinosaur. The battle raged in space, and from time to time one of the opponents of the pillars of light would be caught up and flung far outward, dwindling to the sight, and altering hideously in shape, taking on the aspect of a solid, fleshly form, yet undergoing unceasing metamorphosis.

Suddenly, in the midst of this interstellar engagement, it was as if a curtain had been drawn across the scene; it faded away abruptly, and slowly another took its place, or, rather, a succession of scenes—a strange, black-watered lake, lost among crags in an utterly alien landscape, certainly not terrestrial, with a boiling, churning disturbance in the water and the rising of a thing too hideous to be named; a bleak, dark, windswept landscape with snow-covered crags ringing in a great plateau, in the center of which rose a black structure suggesting a many-turreted castle, within which sat enthroned a quartet of sombre beings in the guise of men, attended by huge bat-winged birds; a sea-kingdom, a far cry from Carcassone, similar to that of which I had previously dreamed; a snowy landscape, suggestive of Canadian regions, with a great shape striding across it, as on the wind, blotting out the stars, showing in their place great shining eyes, a grotesque caricature on mankind in the Arctic wastes.

These scenes passed before my eyes in dream with ever-increasing rapidity, and only one was remotely recognizable: a sea-coast town which, I was confident, was in Massachusetts or at least somewhere along the New England coast, and there I saw, moving about in its streets, people I remembered having seen far back in memory—particularly the always heavily veiled figure of the woman who had been my mother.

The dream ended at last. I woke again, far from sleep now, filled with a thousand perplexing questions, unable to know the meaning and significance of what I had seen in dream, the kaleidoscope of events utterly beyond my ken. I lay trying to thread them together, to evoke or create a common link; but I could find none save the nebulous mythology of which Professor Shrewsbury had spoken in only the most superficial way.

I rose presently and went out on deck. The night was calm, a moon shone, the ship moved steadily through the South Pacific toward our goal. The hour was late, past midnight, and I stood at the rail watching the passing scene—the stars, wondering where, if any place, life such as mankind

knew it existed; the sea, with the moonlight glinting and gleaming on the gently swelling water, wondering whether, indeed, there had ever existed the legendary sunken continents, whether cities had sunk beneath the sea's surface in ages gone by, and what denizens of the deep lurked in those depths as yet unknown to man.

Presently, however, the sound of our passage began to have a peculiarly illusory effect, and at the same time I was given to imagining that dark shapes swam with the ship, alongside, shapes in the guise, however distorted, of human beings; it seemed to my already overwrought mind that the very water seemed to whisper my name: *Horvath Blayne! Horvath Blayne!* over and over, and it was then as if a dozen voices whispered back: *Horvath Waite! Horvath Waite!*, until at last I was overcome by the conviction that I should turn back, go away, return to my ancestral home, as if I did not know that it had been destroyed in the holocaust of 1928. So overpoweringly suggestive did this illusion become, that I turned at last and sought the comparative peace of my cabin, where I took once again to my berth, hoping this time for sleep undisturbed by any dream.

Then at last I slept.

4

ON OUR ARRIVAL at Ponape, our party was met by a grim-visaged American naval official in white uniform, who drew Professor Shrewsbury to one side and spoke briefly with him, while we waited, together with a shabby-looking seaman who seemed also to desire some words with the professor. This seaman presently caught the professor's eye; certainly Professor Shrewsbury did not resent the seaman's familiarity, and within a few moments he was walking at the professor's side, talking animatedly in a dialect I did not clearly understand.

The professor listened to him but a short while. Then he halted our party and abruptly altered our immediate plans.

"Phelan and Blayne, come along with me. The rest of you go to our quarters. Keane, send for Brigadier-General Holberg, and ask him to see me."

Phelan and I therefore accompanied Professor Shrewsbury and his rough companion, who led the way through devious streets and lanes to a

building which was assuredly little more than a hovel. Lying on a pallet there, another seaman awaited us. Both men had evidently had foreknowledge of our arrival, for the professor had sent ahead months ago for any lore of a mysterious island which rose on occasion and vanished as strangely. It was manifestly such knowledge as the ailing seaman wished now to impart.

His name was Satsume Sereke; he was of Japanese extraction, but clearly of mixed blood, and of more than usual education. He was approaching middle age, but looked older. He had been a hand on a tramp steamer, the *Yokohama,* out of Hong Kong; the steamer had been wrecked and he had been one of the men in a lifeboat. Before permitting him to go farther, Professor Shrewsbury now asked us to take careful note of what Sereke said. The account I set down differed in no detail from Phelan's. We made no attempt, of course, to reproduce the exact language of the ailing man.

"Our course was for Ponape. Bailey had a compass, and so we knew about where we were going. The first night after the storm we were moving along all right—Henderson and Melik were at the oars, with Spolito and Yohira—it was clear, we had enough food and water, nobody dreaming anything, I mean—we saw something in the water. We thought it was sharks or porpoises, maybe marlins, we couldn't see well enough. It was dark, and they stayed away from the boat, just followed us and went along with us. Along about my watch, they came closer. They had a funny look, like they had arms and legs instead of fins and a tail, but they were up and down so much you couldn't be sure. Then, quicker than a cat, something reached over into the boat and got Spolito—just pulled him out; he screamed, and Melik reached out for him, but he was gone before Melik could get to him. Melik said he saw something like a webbed hand; he was near crazy with fear afterward; Spolito just went down and never came up again. All our followers were gone quick; then they came back, an hour later, and that time they got Yohira the same way. After that nothing more, and when morning came we saw the island.

"It was an island, where none was before. There was nothing growing on it, and it was black with muck, I think. But there were remains of buildings on it, buildings like I never saw before, with big odd-shaped blocks of stone. There was an open door, very large, partly broken away. Henderson had the glasses, and he got a good look. Then he passed them around. Hen-

derson wanted to go to the place, but I didn't. Well, he talked, and Mason, Melik, and Gunders decided to go ashore; Benton and I held back, and the way we settled it was we rowed over, and Benton and I stayed in the boat with the glasses to watch the others.

"They got out and sloshed through the muck and seaweed to the stones, and then they went on to that doorway. All four of them were there, and I was looking at them through the glasses. I don't know how it happened, but something big and black just puffed out of that doorway and fell on the four of them. It pulled back with a horrible sucking noise, but Henderson and Mason and the others were gone. Benton had seen it, too, but not as clear. I didn't go to look, I didn't want to see any more. We rowed as fast as we could and got away from there. We never stopped rowing until the freighter *Rhineland* picked us up."

"Did you set down the latitude and longitude of the island?" asked Professor Shrewsbury.

"No. But we lost the ship at about South Latitude 49° 51', West Longitude 128° 34'. It is toward Ponape from there, but not close to Ponape."

"You saw this thing in the morning, by daylight?"

"Yes, but there were fogs—green fogs; it was not clear."

"How far out of Ponape?"

"Perhaps a day."

Professor Shrewsbury succeeded in establishing no more. Nevertheless, he appeared pleased; he paused only long enough to ascertain that Sereke would recover from the shock and exhaustion which gripped him; then he returned to the quarters he had arranged for us.

There we found Brigadier-General Holberg, a grim, grey-haired man of approximately sixty, waiting for us. Immediately after introductions had been exchanged, he came to the subject of his presence and his reason for it.

"I have been told to place myself at your disposal, Professor Shrewsbury, by an authority I cannot very well disregard." He smiled frostily. "Operation Ponape is apparently your personal project, sir."

"You have been given some of the documents to read, surely?"

"I have read the documents, yes. I have no comment to make. This is your field, not mine. I have a destroyer ready for your use as soon as you wish

to come aboard. A carrier is within call, and the weapon is in readiness, subject to my order. I understand you will attempt destruction with other weapons first?"

"That is the plan, yes."

"When do you expect to leave Ponape, sir?"

"Within a week, General."

"Very good. We shall be at your disposal."

The events of that week on Ponape were essentially trivial, concerning primarily the amassing of powerful explosive weapons for use on the Black Island, if indeed we could find that uncharted land area. But behind these superficial tasks loomed something profoundly disturbing. It was not alone the undeniable fact that we were under surveillance; we had come to expect that. It was not only that we were constantly aware of an impending task of singular magnitude; this too was to be expected. No, it was something more, it was the consciousness of the proximity of a vast and primeval power, which gave off a malignance almost tangible. All of us felt this; I alone felt something more.

Yet I could not define the intangible fear under which I labored. It was far more than fear of the evil that lurked in the sea off Ponape; it was something that reached to the very well-springs of my being, something integral in my essential self, something that was omnipresent like a pulsing undercurrent in my very blood and bone. Try as I might, I could not rid myself of it; I regretted a thousand times having yielded to Professor Shrewsbury's invitation that evening in Singapore, which already seemed incredibly far away. This cloud hung over me without alleviation day after day until the day of our departure from Ponape.

That day dawned sultry and hot—and, for me, filled with foreboding. We set out early on the destroyer *Hamilton,* with General Holberg aboard. Professor Shrewsbury had worked out a course; he had had further discussions with the seaman, Sereke, and he had arrived at an approximate location. Nor, I gathered, had the General been idle; aeroplanes had been scouting the sea in the vicinity of the place where the *Yokohama* had gone down, and one pilot had reported seeing a curiously fog-shrouded area in the sea; no land had been visible, but the occurrence of an unmoving mass

of fog was in itself strange enough to command attention. The latitude and longitude had been sent in, and it was for this spot that the *Hamilton* set out.

Despite my forebodings, however, our journey was singularly uneventful. The clouds which had obscured the sun at dawn drew away by midday; the sultriness, too, vanished and gave way to a clear, less humid atmosphere. An air of excitement prevailed, a kind of tension which we all shared, except for the General, whose manner was that of a military man obeying an order without quite believing in its necessity. He and the professor held some colloquy on the destructiveness of modern warfare. And what, Professor Shrewsbury wanted to know, was likely to happen to so small a land area as the Black Island?

"Wiped out," said the General laconically.

"I wonder," answered the professor. "We shall see."

I do not know whether I actually expected the destroyer to reach the Black Island; certainly I did not share the General's calm confidence. But in late afternoon of that day we sighted an uncharted island, and within a short time we were lowering a boat containing Professor Shrewsbury, Phelan, Keane, and myself; a second boat carried paraphernalia together with Boyd and Colum, and two men from the destroyer. Significantly, the ship's guns were trained on the structure just visible on the island.

It did not surprise me to find the Black Island to be the temple peak of my dream. Here it was, exactly as I had seen it, with the carven door open and the mouth of that great portal yawning to the sun despite an aura of mist which lay greenly over everything. The ruins were breathtaking, though plainly ravaged by quakes and, quite clearly, by explosives, whose ineffectual damage differed from that greater damage of earthquake, which had burst asunder many of the angles of the colossal stone building. The stones, like the soil, were black, and forbidding; and their surfaces were covered with terrible hieroglyphs and shocking images. The building was composed of angles and planes which were non-Euclidean, hinting horribly of alien dimensions and spheres, as had this building and what remained of the sunken city beyond it been constructed by non-terrestrials.

Professor Shrewsbury cautioned us before we landed.

"I believe Sereke's story to be substantially true," he said, "and I have no hope that this attack will seal the opening or destroy its guardians. We must therefore be prepared to flee at the slightest suggestion that something is ris-

ing from below. We need not fear anything other which might appear; the stones will protect us from them; but if He who waits dreaming below rises, we dare not linger. Let us therefore lose no time in mining the portal."

The surface of the island was cloying. The muck had not yet been exposed sufficiently to the sun to be dried; moreover, the pale green mists which continued to hang about the island were humid and faintly malodorous, not alone of the exposed surfaces of something long under water, but of something more, an animal-like smell which was neither a musk nor a pungency, but a cloying, almost charnel smell. The atmosphere of the island differed sharply from that of the surrounding sea; perhaps it was the cloying smell, perhaps the humidity, perhaps the exhalation of the ancient stones. And over all hung an aura of dread, all the more inexplicable for the still brightly-shining sun, and the protective presence of the *Hamilton,* lying not far off shore.

We worked rapidly. Nevertheless, none of us could escape the growing sense of malevolence which was manifest. The aura of dread which clung to the island heightened steadily, apprehension of some impending horror increased; there was a mounting tension among us, despite the fact that Professor Shrewsbury maintained a ceaseless vigilance at the very threshold of the yawning cavern, ingress to which was afforded by the broken doorway; it was plain to see that he expected danger from this source, if no other, though the very waters around the island were fraught with peril, if Sereke's story were uncolored by his imagination.

At the same time I was agonizingly aware of inimical forces which seemed almost personal; I felt them physically, quite apart from the chaotic confusion of my thoughts. In truth, the island affected me profoundly, and its effect was cumulative, not only fear but a deep depression of my spirits, not only apprehension but a basic disorder of such a nature as to stir up within me a conflict, of the significance of which I was not cognizant, but a conflict which was alarmingly disorganizing, so that I found myself at one and the same time eager to help and anxious to impede or destroy the work being done by my companions.

It was almost with relief that I heard the professor's abrupt cry, "He is coming!"

I looked up. There was a faint green luminosity showing far down the well of dark within the portal, just such a luminosity as I had seen in my

dream. I knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that what would emerge from that maw would be akin to the being seen in my dream, also, a terrifyingly horrible caricature of an octopoid creature with the grotesquely gigantic half-head of a human being. And for one instant I was moved, not to follow the others, who were already on their way down to the boats, carrying the detonator for the explosives which had been laid all about the portal, but to hurl myself down into that pit of darkness, down the monolithic steps, to that nether place in accursed R'lyeh where Great Cthulhu lay dreaming, waiting his time to rise once more and seize the waters and the lands of earth.

The moment broke. I turned at Professor Shrewsbury's sharp call, and followed, with the malevolence of that charnel place rising behind me like a cloud, and with the horrible conviction that I was marked as the especial victim of that ghastly being making its way out of the depths below that eldritch temple. I was the last of them to reach the boats, and at once we pushed off for the destroyer.

It was still light, though the day was now far gone. The sun had not yet gone down, so that what took place on that awe-inspiring island was plainly visible to all of us. We had moved as far out into the sea as the wires to the explosives permitted. There we waited upon Professor Shrewsbury's order to detonate the explosives, and we were accordingly given the opportunity to see the emergence of the ghastly being from the depths.

The first movement was of tentacles, which came oozing forth from the opening, slithering over the great rocks, accompanied by a horrible sloshing, sucking sound, as of great footsteps in the bowels of earth. Then abruptly there loomed within the portal, preceded by an emanation of green light, a thing which was little more than a protoplasmic mass, from the body of which a thousand tentacles of every length and thickness flailed forth, from the head of which, constantly altering in shape from an amorphous bulge to a simulacrum of a man's head, a single malevolent eye peered. A shocking sound as of retching, accompanied by ululations and a fluted whistling, came to us across the water.

I closed my eyes; I could not bear to see in reality the horror I had seen in dream so short a time ago.

At that instant, Professor Shrewsbury gave the signal.

The explosives burst with a tremendous concussion. What had survived that earlier explosion, including now the portal itself, burst upward and outward. The thing in the doorway, too, was torn open, and in a few moments, portions of the stone blocks fell upon it, further shattering it. But, chillingly, when the sound of the explosion had died away, there came to our ears still, without change, the ululations and the whistling and the retching sounds we had heard. And there, before our eyes, the shattered mass of the thing from the depths, was flowing together like water, *reforming,* shaping itself anew once more!

Professor Shrewsbury's face was grim, but he did not hesitate. He ordered the boats returned to the destroyer at once; what we had seen lent strength and purpose to our arms, and we reached the *Hamilton* within a very short time.

General Holberg, glasses in hand, faced us on the top deck. "A shocking thing, Professor Shrewsbury. Must it be the weapon?"

Professor Shrewsbury nodded silently.

General Holberg raised one arm aloft.

"Now let us watch," he said.

The thing on the island was still growing. It towered now above the ruins, expanding into the heavens, beginning to flow down to the water's edge.

"Horrible, horrible," murmured General Holberg. "What in God's name is it?"

"Perhaps something from an alien dimension," replied the professor wearily. "No one knows. It may be that even the weapon is powerless against it."

"Nothing can resist that, sir."

"The military mind," murmured the professor.

The *Hamilton* was moving away, gathering speed.

"How long will it take, General?"

"The carrier will have had our signal by this time; the plane was loaded. It should not take longer than it takes us to reach the limit of safety."

On the island a great black mass stood out against the setting sun, diminishing now only because we were moving so rapidly away from it. Presently the island itself was lost, and only the suggestive black mass remained, dark upon the heavens.

Overhead roared an aeroplane, making for the island.

"There it goes," cried General Holberg. "Please look away. Even at this distance the light will be blinding."

We turned obediently.

In a few moments the sound came, shockingly. In another few seconds the force of the explosion struck us like a physical blow. It seemed a long time before the General spoke again.

"Look now, if you like."

We turned.

Over the place where the Black Island had been loomed now a gigantic cloud, mushrooming and billowing skyward, a cloud greater than the size of the island itself, of white and grey and tan colors, beautiful in itself to see. And I knew what the "weapon" had been, remembering Hiroshima and the Bikini experiment, I knew what a titanic force had fallen upon that hideously menacing island risen from the Pacific for the last time only to be blown asunder with all that it contained, forever.

"I rather think it cannot have survived that," said General Holberg calmly.

"I pray Heaven you are right," said Professor Shrewsbury firmly.

I remember now, after all these months, how sober and grave Professor Shrewsbury was at our parting. I remember how he said something in sympathy, and I did not then understand it, but since then I have come to know that somehow, despite the fact that behind those black glasses he always wore, that strange and wise man had no eyes with which to see, and yet saw, he saw more than I myself knew about myself.

I think of this now often. We parted where we had met, at Singapore. From Singapore I went back to Cambodia, then to Calcutta, then to Tibet and back to the coast, from which I took ship for America, driven now by more than curiosity about archaeology, by an insistence upon knowing more of myself, of my father and mother, of my grandparents. We parted as friends, united by a common bond. Professor Shrewsbury's words had been hopeful, yet faintly prophetic. Perhaps, he had said, *He* had died in the atomic blast; but we must recognize, he had insisted, that something from an alien dimension, something from another planet, might not be subject to our natural laws; one could only hope. His work was either done or had

gone as far as it could go, short of ceaseless vigilance to stop up temporarily every avenue to the open that might be attempted by Cthulhu or those who followed him, who worshipped him and did the bidding of the Ancient Ones.

Because I alone, of the six of us, had no doubt. Not of the death and disintegration of the thing on the Black Island, but of its survival. I knew by an intuition I could not then explain that R'lyeh still stood in its depths, wounded but not destroyed, that the dweller in those subaqueous depths still existed in whatever form he chose to assume, that his worshippers still bowed in submission to him from every sea and port in the world.

I went home to find out why I had had what I recognized as a feeling of kinship for the Deep Ones, for the thing that lived in the sunken realm of R'lyeh, for Cthulhu, of whom it was once said and is still said, and will be said until the coming again, *"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'leyh wgah-nagl fhtagn."* I went home to Massachusetts to discover why my mother went veiled for most of her life, to learn what it meant to be one of the Waites of Innsmouth, destroyed by the Federals in 1928 to wipe out the accursed plague which had come upon the inhabitants, including the Waites who were my grandparents and my parents.

For their blood flows in my veins, the blood of the Deep Ones, the spawn of that black mating in the South Pacific. And I know that I have earned their especial hatred as a traitor to that blood, for even now I feel the longing to descend into the depths, to make my way to the glory of Y'ha-nthlei where it lies in the Atlantic off Devil Reef beyond Innsmouth, to the splendor of R'lyeh in the waters near Ponape, and even now I know the fear of going to them with the taste of treachery in my mouth.

At night I hear them, calling, *"Horvath Waite. Horvath Waite!"*

And I wonder how long it will be before they seek me out and find me.

For it was vain to hope, as Professor Shrewsbury did, that Cthulhu could have been vanquished so easily. The battle of the Elder Gods had been far greater, far more titanic than even that impressive bomb which had erased the Black Island from the face of the Pacific that memorable day. And that interstellar battle had lasted long before victory was won by the Elder Gods, who were all-powerful, who were great above all others and banished the Ancient Ones to outer darkness forever.

For weeks after my shocking discovery, I asked myself which one of us

would be the first to be discovered. I asked myself how it would be brought about—certainly by no crude means, no alarming crime which might startle into renewed activity Professor Shrewsbury and Andrew Phelan and the others.

And today the papers brought me the answer.

> "Gloucester, Mass.—The Rev. Abel Keane, a newly ordained clergyman, was drowned today while swimming near Gloucester. He had been accounted an excellent swimmer, but went down within sight of many other bathers. His body has not yet been recovered. . . ."

Now I ask myself who will be next?

And how long will it be in the endless progression of days before those who serve Him will summon me to atonement in those black depths where Great Cthulhu lies dreaming, waiting upon his time to rise again and take possession of the lands and the seas and all that lives within them, once more as before, once more and forever?

A NOTE ON THE CTHULHU MYTHOS

THE CTHULHU MYTHOS is a myth-pattern developed gradually by the late H. P. Lovecraft in the final phase of his creative work in the genre of the macabre. Lovecraft saw it as "based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by another race who, in practising black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside ever ready to take possession of this earth again." Its similarity to the Christian mythos—as well as to other myth-patterns common to both history and fiction—will be immediately apparent to the literate reader.

The Mythos was evolved very slowly, and there is much to indicate that in its initial stages at least, Lovecraft had no intention or plan to bring the Cthulhu Mythos into being as finally it did take shape. Its pattern grew piecemeal and finally took shape in definite form as Lovecraft himself became aware of the panoply of deities, books, place-names, and the other trappings of the Mythos which were already implicit in the stories he had written. There is, in fact, no hard and fast line separating Lovecraft's Dunsanian tales from the stories which are definitely part of the Mythos, though these latter may be said to have begun with *The Nameless City,* in which the *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred first makes its appearance, and

to have ended, chronologically, with *The Thing on the Doorstep.* It was given its first indication of shape in *The Call of Cthulhu.*

The deities of Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos consisted first of the Elder Gods, which, though beyond mundane morality, beyond "good" and "evil," were nevertheless proponents of order and thus represented the forces of enlightenment as against the forces of evil, represented by the Ancient Ones or the Great Old Ones, who rebelled against the Elder Gods, and were thrust—like Satan—into outer darkness. The Elder Gods (only one of whom, Nodens, Lord of the Great Abyss, is given a name) existed at or near Betelgeuse in the constellation Orion, very rarely stirring forth to intervene in the incessant struggle between the powers of darkness, seeking to gain control, and the races of Earth. The Ancient Ones, who make terrifying appearances in Lovecraft's tales, were led by the blind idiot god, Azathoth—an "amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the center of all infinity"—and included Yog-Sothoth, sharer of Azathoth's dominion, a being not subject to the laws of time and space, but co-existent with all time and conterminous with all space, Nyarlathotep, the Messenger, Great Cthulhu, banished to hidden R'lyeh in the depths of the sea, Hastur the Unspeakable, exiled to the Hyades, Shub-Niggurath, "the Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young"—suggesting parallels to the elements of air, earth, water, etc.

There has been some suggestion on the part of commentators and critics—among whom Colin Wilson is the most recent (see *The Strength to Dream*)—that Lovecraft took the Cthulhu Mythos seriously. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Lovecraft created his Mythos as pure entertainment, no more. It was not wholly original, for he freely borrowed trivial but colorful details from other writers—Poe, Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Ambrose Bierce, Robert W. Chambers—and, to expand his original concepts, he urged other writers to add to the panoply of deities, to the prehuman races and the contemporary hybrid races serving them (like the Deep Ones, the Abominable Snowmen of Mi-Go, etc.), the place-names (like Kadath in the Cold Waste, the Plateau of Leng, and those Massachusetts towns corresponding to Marblehead, Wilbraham, and Salem—Kingsport, Dunwich, and Arkham—which was adopted for the imprint of Arkham House), the shunned books, so rarely found (like the *Necronomicon,* the

Pnakotic Manuscripts, the *Dhol Chants,* the *Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan,* the *R'lyeh Text,* etc.).

In this manner the Cthulhu Mythos grew. The primary stories of the Cthulhu Mythos by Lovecraft were thirteen in number—*The Nameless City, The Festival, The Call of Cthulhu, The Colour Out of Space, The Dunwich Horror, The Whisperer in Darkness, The Dreams in the Witch-House, The Haunter of the Dark, The Shadow Over Innsmouth, The Shadow Out of Time, At the Mountains of Madness, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward,* and *The Thing on the Doorstep.* To these, other writers added almost a hundred more stories, sometimes expanding the Mythos with deities, place-names, books, etc., of their own invention, sometimes working within Lovecraft's original pattern—writers like Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard, August Derleth, Robert Bloch, Henry Kuttner, and, most recently, J. Ramsey Campbell, who constructed an entire milieu in England paralleling the Arkham-Dunwich-Kingsport setting in Massachusetts.

Thus, to the original Lovecraft collections containing stories in the Cthulhu Mythos were shortly added books by other writers further expanding the Mythos—Frank Belknap Long's *The Hounds of Tindalos* and *The Horror from the Hills;* Clark Ashton Smith's *Out of Space and Time, Lost Worlds, Genius Loci and Other Tales, The Abominations of Yondo,* August Derleth's *The Lurker at the Threshold, The Survivor and Others, Something Near, Someone in the Dark, The Mask of Cthulhu,* and the present volume; Robert Bloch's *The Opener of the Way;* and lesser, uncollected stories by these and other writers.

Lovecraft took pleasure in this outré world of his creation just as, in his childhood, he had delighted in recreating the world of ancient Greece and in his youth that of eighteenth century England. Early in the Cthulhu Mythos stories occurred a quotation from Algernon Blackwood which sets the mood—"Of such great powers or beings there may be conceivably a survival . . . a survival of a hugely remote period when . . . consciousness was manifested, perhaps, in shapes and forms long since withdrawn before the tide of advancing humanity . . . forms of which poetry and legend alone have caught a flying memory and called them gods, monsters, mythical beings of all sorts and kinds." Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos was his own imaginary "flying memory," intended for nothing more than his own entertainment and that of the growing audience, which, familiar with the

stories as they appeared in *Weird Tales,* clamored for more. In sum, the Cthulhu Mythos stories are minor but curiously interesting tales in the Gothic tradition, and that readers should actually have presented themselves at bookstores and libraries in search of the imaginary books of the Mythos would have amazed Lovecraft as much as it would have offered him new evidence of the gullibility of many people before the printed word.

—AUGUST DERLETH
1962